

Jordan to send relief to Iraq, Palestine

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan is to send badly needed relief supplies including drugs and foodstuffs in addition to stationery to Iraq and Palestine, according to a government statement following a regular Cabinet session Saturday. The statement said that upon directions from His Majesty King Hussein and in conjunction with the Hashemite Charitable Organisation (HCO) and a number of private and public organisations, the government will dispatch medicines, medical equipment, stationery and food supplies to the Iraqi people on the occasion of the beginning of the new school year. The HCO's board of trustees is chaired by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan. The statement added that the organisation will also dispatch relief supplies, medicines and medical equipment to the Palestinian people. The statement said that the supplies will be sent within two days.



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Government confirms 'assault'; Hamas leader in stable condition

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The government on Saturday confirmed claims made by the Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, that its leader Khaled Misha'al was "assaulted" and those involved in the attack against him were in detention.

Meanwhile, Mr. Misha'al was reported recovering at King Hussein Medical Centre (KHMC) following the assault and medical sources confirmed that he is in stable condition.

The sources said that, upon instructions from His Majesty King Hussein, the KHMC brought in a physician from the Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minnesota, to help diagnose Mr. Misha'al's ailment.

The medical sources told the Jordan Times that the Hamas leader talked to his doctors after disconnecting the ventilator and replacing it with an oxygen mask.

However, the sources said that even though the Mayo Clinic doctor is inclined to believe that Mr. Misha'al was injected with a complex poisonous substance, he hasn't been able to diagnose the substance and plans on taking samples back to the U.S. for further testing on Monday.

Retracting a Thursday statement that said Mr. Misha'al and his bodyguards were involved in a brawl with two Canadian tourists, Minister of State for Information Affairs Samir Mutawi neither confirmed nor denied that the Israeli secret service,

Mossad, was involved in the attack against the Hamas leader.

"The interrogation is not finalised yet. It is difficult to reveal the outcome before the interrogation is over. Those who took part in the incident are still under treatment," Dr. Mutawi said.

He told reporters Saturday that following the weekly Cabinet session "the investigation has revealed that Mr. Misha'al had been subjected to an attack against him before there was a quarrel."

"The two Canadians were shopping in the area where Mr. Misha'al's office [is located]. They were suspected by his driver, so some form of a quarrel occurred after which they took their car and tried to get away. They were later chased by Mr. Misha'al's driver," the minister said.

Dr. Mutawi's statement confirms the previous communications issued by Hamas and in which they said that their leader faced an assassination attempt Thursday morning.

The government denied the Hamas statements and described what happened as merely a "quarrel" between Canadian tourists and Mr. Misha'al's bodyguards.

Dr. Mutawi said that the brawl that the government's statement spoke about following the attack was issued "half an hour after the quarrel" that led to the arrest of the two Canadians.

He emphasised that following the attack against Mr. Misha'al, the two foreigners tried to "get away," but were



Khaled Misha'al (File photo)

chased by one of the Hamas leader's bodyguards, who managed to catch one of the two men.

"After that, the Canadian tourists took their car and went somewhere, where they were chased by Mr. Misha'al's driver," Dr. Mutawi said.

"When the police car arrived at the place of the quarrel, all involved were taken for interrogation including the two Canadians," the minister added.

Dr. Mutawi said that the two Canadians, whose names have not been declared yet, are still in "custody" for further interrogation. He added that the only things found with them were "Canadian passports."

The Minister ruled out any link between the attack against Mr. Misha'al on Thursday and the ambush of two Israeli embassy employees last Monday and said that the only linkage is that "the two incidents took place over a very close period of time."

responsible for the attack."

"We are sure that the Israeli Mossad is behind the attack. We call upon the government to unveil the identity of the perpetrators," Mr. Nazal said.

Mr. Nazal said that the American doctor, who was called to Jordan upon King Hussein's instructions to oversee the treatment of Mr. Misha'al, demanded a "blood test" for the Hamas leader.

Mr. Nazal added that the doctor believes that "a strange chemical material is still in Mr. Misha'al's body and all tests now are directed towards identifying its nature."

In their previous statements, Hamas said that the two Canadians used a "strange instrument" which was allegedly placed on Mr. Misha'al's head by one of the two foreigners.

A Hamas statement issued on Saturday said that "the terrorists, whom the idiotic [Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin] Netanyahu had sent, have tried to inject as much as they can from the mysterious substance into Mr. Misha'al's head."

"According to medical sources, the objective of these terrorists was to kill him through injecting as much as they can from this substance," the one-page statement said.

"Hamas calls upon the government of Jordan to quickly locate the instrument [used by the two Canadians] to help doctors in extending the necessary medical treatment," it added.

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NCP announces its election candidates; issues platform

By Francesca Ciriaci
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The National Constitutional Party (NCP) announced yesterday a preliminary list of 12 candidates it intends to field in the Nov. 4 elections and unveiled a platform based mainly on their support for the peace process and economic reforms.

The number of candidates is substantially fewer than the figure the party floated earlier this summer, when it suggested it could field between 40-60 candidates.

NCP Secretary General Abdul Hadi Majali told a press conference yesterday that "the situation in certain districts is still unclear and the party preferred to wait, especially considering that there are still ten days to the start of candidates' official registrations," which is set for Oct. 10.

Stressing that the NCP ticket was still "open," Mr. Majali did not rule out that after the polls, newly elected deputies sharing the party's principles and programme would join the party and its parliamentary bloc.

The NCP ticket, as announced yesterday, includes prominent figures who are already nominated by their tribes such as Mr. Majali himself (Karak), NCP Deputy Secretaries Abdul Ra'uf Rawabdeh (Irbid) and Talal Ramahi (Zarqa), former Deputies Ramez Sa'oud (Tafilah) and Jamal Khreisha (Central Bedouins).

The list also includes Ibrahim Khair Keilani and Farah Rabadi (Third District); Jamal Ma'alawani (Second District); Mohammed Odeh Najadat and Abdullah Jazi (Southern Bedouins); Daad Tamimi (Aqaba); and Hisham Sharari (Ma'an).

In contrast with the length of the ticket, the party's platform largely conformed to analysts' expectations, declaring that "peace is now a strategic international and Arab choice" and that the peace process can be put back on track through "unifying Arab stands."

"We believe that peace should be a just, comprehensive and lasting one," the party's manifesto maintained. "A just peace is one that ensures the restoration of people's rights and a full commitment to international laws. As for a comprehensive peace, it is a peace

on all tracks, without excluding any party. Lasting peace is one in which people believe and which ensures security, welfare, equal rights in development for everyone, distanced from hegemony and expansionism," the document stated.

"Through unifying Arab stands we can put the peace process back on track and force Israel to abide by international laws and treaties, and secure the neutrality of the U.S.," it added.

The party's economic plan called for "reformulating development strategies to help our national savings and work force regain their important role and provide an adequate income for each family."

As the means of boosting the economy it indicated "the formulation of a new role of the audit bureau," the implementation of anti-monopoly measures, improvements in the performance of government's departments, and the "reconsideration of custom duties."

Stressing the importance of economic liberalisation, the NCP manifesto called for "lowering custom barriers, facilitating the movement of goods across borders, providing a suitable climate for local and international investment, and lifting all barriers to the flow of goods and capital."

The document also stressed the need for fighting unemployment and expanding the categories of those covered by social security "in order to include all workers as well as the unemployed."

On other subjects, the NCP pointed to the need to fight corruption and introduce new legislation. "We call for the enhancement of public freedoms, the protection of human rights, and the modernisation of laws in accordance with the Constitution."

The NCP listed the controversial "Elections Law, Political Parties Law, and Press and Publications Law," as some of those that need reviewing, and called for the independence of the judiciary.

The manifesto dedicated a chapter to Jordanian-Palestinian relations, pledging NCP support to the Palestinian people "until they reach and acquire their rights to self-determination on their national soil, the creation of an independent state with Jerusalem as its capital, and

are guaranteed their right of return to their homeland.

"We also want to highlight the need for cooperation and coordination with the Palestinian National Authority, and for its support at all levels and in all arenas, in order to combat all forms of Israeli hegemony and its expansionist policies as well as the American bias towards Israel."

After the Palestinians regain their rights, the manifesto refers to a "form of union" between Jordan and the Palestinians, "based on the choice of the two peoples."

The NCP platform put particular emphasis on the role of women, and called for "giving women the opportunity to occupy leading posts in the government and society, fighting all kinds of gender discrimination, acquainting them with their rights and responsibilities, and amending the laws that restrict their rights and access to certain fields."

In a chapter on housing, the NCP called for "a comprehensive strategic plan that takes into consideration social, economic, environmental and population requirements, and encourages housing funds and housing programmes in the private sector."

In the field of public works, the manifesto stressed the need for "restructuring public and private transport to make it operate on a commercial basis, expanding postal services to cover all villages, transferring postal savings funds into savings banks, and operating the already existing railways as links between the major cities."

As for the field of agriculture, "we call on the government to start planning in order to safeguard suitable prices for produce, establishing an insurance company for agricultural purposes, giving incentives to Jordanian farmers and combating any kind of monopoly," the document said.

In addition, the manifesto also pointed out the need for "comprehensive health insurance coverage," as well as the development of alternative energy studies (mainly wind power and solar energy) and the expansion of the sewage system.

The platform did not overlook environmental issues, pointing to the need for "protecting our water resources, forests, pastoral lands, wild life, and clean air."

Israelis, Palestinians clash at Gaza settlement; Palestinians say Israel wants to return to war

Combined agency dispatches

TWO PALESTINIANS were injured Saturday when Israeli soldiers opened fire with rubber-coated bullets on rock-throwing students outside a Jewish settlement in Gaza.

The clashes started when several hundred Palestinian schoolchildren came out of schools for a demonstration outside the settlement of Kfar Darom in the central Gaza Strip, witnesses said.

Several students threw stones at the large contingent of Israeli soldiers guarding the settlement, who returned fire with rubber-coated bullets. Two students were taken to hospital with moderate injuries.

Palestinian police nearby tried to prevent students from reaching the scene. But the clashes continued and Israeli soldiers closed down the main Gaza road passing near the site, witnesses said.

Some protesters burned Israeli flags and pictures of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Palestinian President Yasser Arafat's Fatah faction had called for demonstrations Saturday morning outside Kfar Darom and Netzarim and at border crossings at the northern and southern tips of Gaza.

The demonstrations are to protest Israel's plans to expand a Jewish settlement in the West Bank, which has attracted widespread condemnation.

Palestinian police said they deployed in force in the Gaza refugee camps of Deir Ballah and Khan Younes, as well as at Beit Hanun near the Erez Crossing between the Gaza Strip and Israel, to prevent any flare-up of violence.

"We have received very precise instructions to stop any friction between Israeli soldiers and protesters," a senior police officer told reporters.

Also on Saturday Palestinian officials accused Israel of aiming to "turn back the clock" to return to war after the Israeli army conducted exercises for possible armed battles in Palestinian territories.

The government of Mr. Netanyahu "is determined to blow up the peace process and to turn back the clock by its use of war to impose its dictates," said Nabil Abu Rudeineh, a top adviser to Mr. Arafat.

"Netanyahu's plans will explode not only the situation in the Palestinian territories but also in Syria and in the entire region, which will have consequences for the world," he told Agence France Presse.

Israel Radio said Friday that the Israeli army had conducted further exercises last week for the possibility of armed conflict with Palestinian security forces.

The army conducted training for potential Palestinian invasions of Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and for possible Israeli invasions of areas under the Palestinian National Authority's (PNA) control.

Fears of violence in the territories have increased with the continuing deadlock in the peace process, now in its seventh month.

The PNA accused Hamas of breaking its promise to stop terrorism and vowed to prevent it from any future acts of violence, its official news agency Wafa said Saturday.

"From today there is no room for any power, no matter what kind of support it has, which seeks to strike at our national mission," the PNA cabinet and PLO said after a meeting in Gaza late Friday.

It said Hamas's "leadership did not meet their responsibilities and respect what they had agreed upon, which was to stop all acts of terrorism and violence."

Palestinian security forces launched a crackdown on Hamas last week, arresting dozens of its members in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

They also shut down 16 welfare organisations run by Hamas in Gaza, which the PNA said were supporting the group's armed activities, in the biggest ever offensive against Hamas's public activities.

Albright lowers tone of voice with Israel ahead of talks due Monday

Combined agency dispatches

UNITED STATES Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said on Friday that Israel's plans to build new settlements in the West Bank town of Efrat may not have been a problem if they had come at another time.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced plans to construct the new units — which have enraged Palestinians — probably "is the kind of thing that should not be a problem," she told Reuters in an interview.

"But given the atmosphere that it was done in, it was my thought that this was an unnecessary kind of a step when what we're trying to do is create the best climate" for peace talks, she said.

Ms. Albright said something "that under other circumstances might not be a problem, when you are in this crisis of confidence and trying to move to [peace] talks, was not helpful."

Her comments were softer than those she made on Thursday when she faulted Mr. Netanyahu's announced plans and called again for a freeze on Jewish settlement in the West Bank, which Palestinians consider provocative.

Mr. Netanyahu not only rejected the freeze but seemed to go out of his way to defy the Americans by announcing plans to build hundreds more settlement units in Efrat and other settlements throughout areas occupied since the 1967 Middle East war.

Ms. Albright said her call for a "time-out" on settlements — which might otherwise provoke opposition from pro-Israel supporters in Congress — seems to have tacit backing.

When she briefed about 60 congressmen and senators recently on

her first Middle East trip earlier this month, "they were supportive of my trip and supportive of what I said," she said.

It was on that trip that Ms. Albright first broached the notion of a time-out, or a freeze on settlements.

As she spoke, U.S. Middle East coordinator Dennis Ross met in New York with Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy to seek ways to revive stalled Israel-Palestinian peace talks.

This was ahead of a key meeting Ms. Albright will host in New York on Monday between Mr. Levy and Palestinian negotiator Mahmoud Abbas to explore ways of ending the six-month deadlock.

An Israeli spokesman said Messrs. Levy and Ross had a good meeting and planned to get together again on Sunday.

While "no dramatic breakthroughs" are expected on Monday, there could be some progress, the spokesman said. But he declined to suggest what that might be.

Egypt Saturday called on the U.S. and Russia, the co-sponsors of the Middle East peace process, to take concrete measures against Israeli settlement expansion.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa, currently in New York, told the Al-Ahram government newspaper that U.S. action so far on the issue was "not sufficient."

"The sponsors of the peace process, the United States and Russia, must take adequate measures against this dangerous violation of the principles of the peace process and international law," said Mr. Musa.

Mr. Musa said Mr. Netanyahu had proved his contempt for the rest of the world by announcing earlier this week the construction of 300 new units in the West Bank settlement of Efrat.

Iraq urges U.N. to condemn Turkish incursion into north

BAGHDAD (R) — Iraq has urged the United Nations to condemn Turkey's incursion into northern Iraq and to press Ankara to withdraw its troops, Iraqi newspapers said on Saturday.

"I call on you ... to condemn this new aggression against a founding member of the United Nations," they quoted Foreign Minister Mohammad Saeed Sahaf as saying in a letter to U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

Some 15,000 Turkish troops backed by air power were still in northern Iraq Friday, three days after launching their latest attack on the Kurdish Labour Party (PKK), a Turkish Kurd group fighting for self-rule in southeast Turkey which often oper-

ates from northern Iraq. Mr. Sahaf urged Mr. Annan to "demand the Turkish government withdraw its troops immediately from Iraqi territory and desist from such aggressive practices."

Turkey's army chief said his troops would soon pull out of the mountainous region, once their mission against the PKK rebels was completed. The operation is Turkey's second major cross-border raid since May.

"The Iraqi government preserves its legitimate right under international law to choose the right response against such military aggression and demands compensation for the damage inflicted as a result of these Turkish violations of Iraq's territory

and air space," Mr. Sahaf said.

The foray has been criticised by state radio in Iran, which borders both Iraq and Turkey. Britain has also expressed concern. Turkey's relations with the Arab World have worsened since it announced a military training pact with Israel in 1996.

Northern Iraq is under the control of Iraqi Kurdish groups which broke from Baghdad after the end of the 1991 Gulf war over Kuwait. Since then a U.S.-led air force based in Turkey has protected northern Iraq Kurds from any Baghdad attack.

But Ankara fears much of the area is falling under the control of the PKK, which has been fighting Iraqi Kurds allied with Turkey.

Rights group condemns PNA crackdown on Hamas

GAZA (R) — A Palestinian human rights group Saturday called on Palestinian National Authority (PNA) President Yasser Arafat to release suspected members of Hamas and reopen the Islam movement's social welfare agencies in the Gaza Strip.

In sweeps over the past four days Palestinian police hunting Hamas activists arrested some 30 Gazans and as many as 40 suspects in the West Bank and closed 16 social institutions in the Gaza Strip, police officials said.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has demanded a far-reaching

Palestinian crackdown on Hamas activists as a precondition to any further return of occupied land to the PNA.

"We call upon the Palestinian [National] Authority to reconsider the decisions of the security agencies and to reopen these associations so they can resume their humanitarian duties and to release all political prisoners," the Al Dameer prisoners and human rights association said in a statement.

It described the arrests and closure of the offices as a violation of human rights and democracy.

Mr. Netanyahu's demand followed two Hamas bomb-

ings that rocked the heart of downtown Jerusalem over the summer, killing 20 Israelis and wounding hundreds.

But Palestinian security officials maintained the campaign was not connected to Israeli demands to battle Hamas and uproot its institutions.

Among the 16 Gaza social institutions Palestinian forces searched and shut down were Gaza's Islamic Society, the society's sports club, the Muslim Women's Society, the Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development and the Islamic Compound, a Palestinian police official said.

Jordan urges Israel to implement Oslo accords

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan Saturday demanded that Israel implement commitments it had made to the Palestinians so that the Middle East region can enjoy the fruits of peace and security.

The call was made by Acting Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour who was addressing a meeting at his

office with a visiting trilateral fact-finding commission entrusted with preparing a report on the progress of the Palestinian-Israeli peace talks.

Reaffirming Jordan's commitment to the implementation of the peace treaty signed with Israel in 1994, the acting prime minister said Israel on its part is

also duty-bound to carry out the accords it has concluded with the Palestinians, noting that progress on the Israeli-Palestinian track has its influence on other tracks of negotiations.

"What is happening in Palestine has its repercussions in Jordan and other concerned Arab countries," he said.

Dr. Ensour and the commission, led by Erigo Levi, exchanged views about the peace process and impediments to its progress, with Dr. Ensour reaffirming that the Arab states consider peace as their strategic option and are seeking a just and comprehensive peace.

Dr. Levi said Europe was eyeing with deep concern

the developments in the Middle East and looking forward to concluding Euro-Mediterranean association agreements based on common interests and seeking real progress for all the countries in the Mediterranean region.

Italy's ambassador to Jordan Francesco Cernilli was present at the meeting.

Iraq renews call for Iran to release all prisoners of war

Baghdad praises former enemy after release of 46 PoWs

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq hailed its former enemy Iran Saturday for the recent release of 46 prisoners of war but called on the Islamic Republic to free all other soldiers still detained.

"Iraq, while appreciating the Iranian initiative, must remind Iran that it only affects a small group of our prisoners detained in Iran and that there are still some 18,229, whose names have been registered officially," the foreign ministry said.

Earlier this week Iran released 46 Iraqi soldiers held since the end of the 1980-88 conflict between the two neighbours and

pledged to free more if Baghdad did the same with Iranian PoWs.

The question of prisoners of war and soldiers missing in action remains the key stumbling block to a normalisation of relations between Iran and Iraq, nine years after a U.N.-brokered ceasefire ended the war.

Liberation of the remaining soldiers would be a "gesture conforming to Islamic precepts and the principles of international humanitarian law under the Geneva Convention on the treatment of prisoners of war," the Iraqi ministry said.

The call came as Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammad Said Sahaf held talks in New York with Iranian counterpart Kamal Kharazi on ways to move towards the normalisation of relations.

The two men discussed "the best ways to establish a political dialogue between the two countries so as to solve outstanding problems," Mr. Sahaf was quoted as saying by the official press.

The meeting on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly on Friday was the first at ministerial level since moderate

Iranian President Mohammad Khatami took office in August.

Mr. Sahaf said Mr. Kharazi had invited him to make an official visit to Tehran to kickstart the dialogue, and that he had also invited Mr. Kharazi to visit Baghdad.

In comparison to the 18,000 prisoners Iraq says are held in Iran, Tehran says at least 5,000 of its soldiers are being held in Iraq, but has not given a figure for the PoWs it holds.

Since the end of the war, around 48,650 Iraqi soldiers have been handed back to Iraq which in turn

has returned more than 39,000 Iranian prisoners of war.

Iraq is also demanding the return of military and civilian aircraft flown to Iran for shelter in the early days of the 1990 Gulf crisis.

Tehran earlier this month snubbed an Iraqi initiative to allow Shiite Muslim pilgrims from Iran to enter the country for the first time in 17 years, after Baghdad refused to negotiate on arrangements.

Mr. Sahaf said he explained to Mr. Kharazi why Iraq had decided to allow the pilgrims to visit.

Iranian police arrest 50 people suspected of sabotage, spying

TEHRAN (AP) — Iranian police have arrested 50 people suspected of spying, sabotage and belonging to an outlawed group in the western province of Kermanshah, the official Islamic Republic News Agency reported Saturday.

Some of the suspects had

confessed to planting bombs, the agency reported intelligence officials as saying.

Twenty-five members of the outlawed Mujahadeen Khalq, an Iraqi-based opposition group, surrendered to the authorities during the past four weeks in Kermanshah, which borders Iraq.

IRNA said.

The report did not say which country the alleged spies had worked for or give other details. But police have detained scores of people in recent years for spying for Iraq, which fought an eight-year war against Iran during the 1980s.

Al Mashreq Al I'lami, Arabic monthly specialised in media, hits newsstands

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

A NEW Arabic monthly newspaper devoted exclusively to covering the media hit the newsstands over the weekend, making it the first such publication in Jordan and the Arab World.

Al Mashreq Al I'lami, the Levant media, was licensed this month as "a specialised publication," in accordance with the articles of the new temporary law for press and publications, and as such it will focus primarily on covering and analysing issues related to Arab journalism and its practice as a profession.

"Considering the great impact that the new revolution in communication technology will have on us, here in the Arab World, and the enormity of the role that the Arab media has to play in the progress and development of our societies, Al Mashreq Al I'lami will no doubt fill a vacuum in the Jordanian and Arab press markets," says Samir Barbour, the editor of the newspaper. "This is an endeavour that has not been attempted before, but we are sure [the newspaper] will have an important role to play in studying, analysing and documenting the work of the media, journalism and journalists in

this part of the world."

The first issue of the 28-page, tabloid-size newspaper tackled, in depth, such issues as the government's decision to suspend the publication of most weekly newspapers in Jordan, the coverage of Princess Diana's death in the Arab media, including an analysis of the recent public debate over publishing sensational stories and pictures in the Arabic press, and the question of whether "city" or "regional" newspapers can spring up and prosper in the Arab World.

Al Mashreq Al I'lami also carried reports and commentaries on newspaper coverage of economic and financial corruption in Jordan, press freedom and obstacles facing journalists in Egypt and other countries, as well as translated articles from international publications with direct relevance to the situation in the Middle East.

The Amman-based AMI hopes to fill an institutional vacuum in, and add a new structure to, Arab journalis-



The front page of Al Mashreq Al I'lami which hit the newsstands over the weekend

tic practice. "The fact that AMI and Al Mashreq have the same mission, namely that of raising professional journalistic standards and defending press freedom in Arab countries and else-

where should help us achieve better and faster results," Mr. Barbour says. "It is not going to be an easy task, but it is one that nevertheless has to be started and built upon."

Arafat warns some Palestinians could face starvation due to Israeli blockade

CAIRO (AP) — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat warned Friday that some Palestinian areas that have been sealed off by Israeli soldiers could face starvation if the blockade is not lifted.

Israel closed off areas under Palestinian control after suspected Islamists carried out two Jerusalem

bombings in July and September which killed 20 Israelis. Although the restrictions have been eased and some 13,000 Palestinians are now allowed into Israel to work, hardships continue.

"Some Palestinian areas are threatened by starvation because of the continuity of the siege," President Arafat

told Egyptian Television. His comments were carried by the official Egyptian Middle East News Agency.

Mr. Arafat said Palestinian areas were losing some \$10 million a day due to the closure. He also warned of the dangers of a complete collapse of the peace process.

Peace talks between Israel

and the Palestinians stalled after Israel broke ground in March on a Jewish settlement on the hilltop of Jabal Abu Ghneim in Arab east Jerusalem, which the Palestinians want as a capital for their would-be state.

"The collapse of the peace process will lead to anarchy in the region," Mr. Arafat warned.

Pentagon opposes losing role in Gulf war syndrome study

WASHINGTON (AP) — Stripping the U.S. Defence Department of its lead role in investigating illnesses allegedly caused by service in the Gulf war would harm, not help, people in the armed forces, defence officials have argued.

The Pentagon is fully capable of conducting its own investigation," Defence Secretary William Cohen told reporters on Thursday. He acknowledged that early Pentagon investigations were not handled well but praised defence staffers for "an extraordinary effort" in the past year.

"I think Dr. Rostker has done a superb job," the secretary said. Bernard Rostker is the Pentagon's top official dealing with the subject.

The suggestion to remove

Pentagon investigators from Gulf war-related probes is contained in a draft of a report that a White House Advisory Committee is to give to President Bill Clinton by Oct. 31.

"This department has a responsibility not only to Gulf veterans but also to future soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines," Dr. Rostker told reporters at a separate briefing. "We have to understand what happened (in the Gulf) to change our procedures, our tactics and our doctrine."

Pentagon spokesman Kenneth Bacon called the White House draft disappointing considering the volume of work and research the Pentagon has done in the past year. The Pentagon "will continue to be as open as we can on this," he said.

'No need to overreact to U.S. snub to Kuwaiti MP'

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — A Kuwaiti newspaper said Saturday the case of MP Hassan Jawhar who was barred from official meetings during a parliamentary visit to Washington should not be "blown out of proportion."

Mr. Jawhar has demanded an explanation from U.S. officials after he was prevented from attending meetings in Congress and the U.S. State Department, without any reason being given, during a parliamentary visit to the U.S. last week.

"It's none of our business to protest against this measure, and we are not required to blow the issue out of proportion, or interfere in the affairs of a great power as if we are greater," the Arab Times said in an editorial.

"We cannot question the U.S. over its sovereign measures. The issue of Mr. Jawhar is a personal one, and he alone should shoulder the consequences," the paper said in its editorial, also carried in its Arabic sister paper Al Sayasah.

"This is an important aspect to clarify, because Kuwait doesn't like anyone to object to its sovereign measures, or interfere in its internal affairs, especially when it comes to deporting an American citizen because he poses a threat to our security," the paper added.

Local press reports claimed the Shiite MP had been barred because of alleged "terrorist" links, although when asked about this Mr. Jawhar said no reason was given.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

14:10 Little Rosey
14:30 The Magic School Bus
15:00 Energy Express
15:40 Lucky Luke
16:00 American Chart Show
17:00 French Programmes
19:00 News in French
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Fresh Prince of Bel-Air
20:00 Cinema, Cinema, Cinema
20:30 National Geographic
21:10 Renegade
22:00 News in English
22:30 One West Walkiki
23:15 Sisters
23:59 End of T.V.

PRAYER TIMES

04:05 Fajr
05:23 (Sunrise) Duha
11:26 Dhuhur
14:51 Asr
17:30 Maghrib
18:47 Tisha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweilfish, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440.

De la Salle Church Tel. 661757

Terra Sancta Church Tel. 622366

Anglican Church Tel. 652826

Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331

Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261

St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751

Armenian International Church Tel. 5516245

Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328

German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 688404

The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932

Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691

The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295

English-speaking Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology
Temperatures are expected to drop significantly. Skies will be partly cloudy with a chance of scattered showers in the northern parts of the Kingdom, and winds westerly moderate to active. In Aqaba, it will be relative hot and dusty,

winds southerly moderate to active becoming northerly moderate during the day, and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp. Amman 14/24

Aqaba 20/33

Deserts 12/28

Jordan Valley 18/33

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 29, Aqaba 36 Humidity readings: Amman 25 per cent, Aqaba 27 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Bassam Karadshah 759200
Dr. Ramzi Mazzawi 894788
Dr. Abdul Wahab Awad 846070
Dr. Khalid Abdo 657129
Firas pharmacy 661912
Ferdows pharmacy 778336
Al Asema pharmacy 637055
Naioukh pharmacy 623672
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shmeisani pharmacy 637660
Najib pharmacy 847632
IRBID:
Dr. Ghazi T'anneh 250080

Al Quds pharmacy (—)

ZARQA:
Dr. Isma'il Tallawi 903469

Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111

Civil Defence Department 661111

Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 630341

Rescue Police 192 621111, 637777

Fire Brigade 617101

Blood Bank 775121

Highway Police 843402

Traffic Police 896390

Public Security Dept. 630321

Hotel Complaints 605800

Price Complaints 661176

Water & Sewage Complaints 897467

Amman Municipality Complaints 787111

Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121

Overseas Calls 010230

Central Amman Telephone Repairs 623101

Abdali Tel. Repairs 661101

Jordan Television 773111

Radio Jordan 774111

Water Authority 680100

J. Electricity Authority 815615

Electric Power Co. 636381

RJ Flight Information 08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Husseini Medical Centre 813813/32

Khalidi Maternity 644281/6

Akileh Maternity 642441/2

Jabal Amman Maternity 642362

Malhas, J. Amman 636140

Palestine, Shmeisani 607071

Shmeisani Hospital 669131

University Hospital 845845

Al-Muasher Hospital 667227/9

The Islamic, Abdali 666126/37

Al-Abli, Abdali 664164/6

Italian, Al-Muhajreen 777101/3

Al-Bashir 775111/26

Army, Marka 891611/15

Queen Alia Hospital 602240/50

Amal Hospital 674155

The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 865199

ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323

Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560

Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986732

Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)990990

IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555

Greek Catholic Hospital (02)272715

Ibn Al Nafes Hospital (02)247100

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)53200-5, where it should always be verified. Information on other flights can be supplied on phone 08 (52700).

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights

08:30 Jeddah (RJ)

09:05 Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)

09:15 Lamaca (RJ)

09:20 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)

09:25 Beirut (RJ)

09:30 Doha, Bahrain (RJ)

11:30 Madrid, Geneva (RJ)

15:00 Brussels (RJ)

16:40 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)

17:05 Paris (RJ)

17:50 London (RJ)

18:10 Athens (RJ)

19:30 Frankfurt (RJ)

Other Flights

11:00 Sanaa (YV)

11:00 Jeddah (SV)

12:35 Bahrain (GF)

14:20 Lamaca (RJ)

18:50 Moscow (SU)

19:40 Tel Aviv (LY)

20:10 London (BA)

20:10 Beirut (ME)

20:35 Cairo (MS)

22:20 Istanbul (TK)

23:00 Cairo (MS)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights

05:00 Madrid (RJ)

05:45 Beirut (RJ)

06:00 Lamaca (RJ)

09:25 Frankfurt (RJ)

11:10 Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)

Other Flights

06:00 Beirut (ME)

12:00 Sanaa (YV)

YMWA marks 25th anniversary Princess Sarvath highlights achievements

By Rana Hussein
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — HRH Princess Sarvath Al Hassan Saturday stressed that since its establishment the Young Muslim Women's Association (YMWA) has developed from a small pioneering effort with idealistic beginnings into an institution which has enabled disadvantaged and mentally challenged children and youth lead dignified and productive lives.

Speaking at a ceremony to mark the 25th anniversary of the YMWA, Princess Sarvath, who is chairperson of the organisation, said she was proud of the association's achievements.

With emphasis on education-related projects, the YMWA established several centres and institutions to provide students in general and the socially disadvantaged and the intellectually disabled in particular with educational and vocational opportunities for self-betterment.

Among these is the Centre for Special Education, started in 1974, and which to date has benefited 1,762 families through the diagnosis of intellectually disabled children and the guidance and counselling of their parents as well as referrals to specialists for appropriate medical assistance.

The centre has provided specialised academic and vocational training to a total of 712 students since it was created.

One success led to another, said Princess Sarvath, who highlighted the achievements of the Sheltered Workshop established in 1987.

The concept of the workshop is to utilise the talents, skills and training of 18-year-old graduates of the Special Education Centre and other similar institutions in the Kingdom.

The result has helped 75 individuals to gain self-esteem and feel they are a part of a useful segment of society as they put their



Her Royal Highness Princess Sarvath Saturday presents an award to a supporter of the YMWA in recognition of his support for the organisation (Photo by Yousef 'Allan')

training to work in the carpentry, metal work, painting, upholstery and other sections of the workshop as well as at nearby factories in the Sahab Industrial Estate.

Coinciding with these two institutions, the YMWA took a serious look at the educational needs of Jordanian society and established the Princess Sarvath Community College in 1980.

The college initially concentrated on specialisations that were considered new fields for women, such as architectural drafting, bilingual secretarial training and business administration, with a target student body of young girls from financially disadvantaged backgrounds.

Disciplines were gradually added, and programmes encompassed an Early Childhood Education Programme and a Learning Difficulties Programme.

Today the centre has become a national referral institution that combats learning difficulties such as dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, and attention deficit disorders by conducting short-term awareness work-

shops and long-term training courses in detecting and assessing these difficulties and in planning individual educational programmes to meet the needs of the disabled learner.

According to Princess Sarvath, the YMWA and its institutions have succeeded in accomplishing their missions "despite the difficulties these establishments have encountered through the years."

At that point, she thanked the government and non-governmental organisations, individuals and the diplomatic missions, saying they have all been "valued friends of the YMWA for many years."

"We owe the success of our various projects over the past 25 years to their generous support of the work we do in the service of the disadvantaged and less fortunate in our society," Princess Sarvath said.

Prince Ra'd Ben Zeid, who himself has also extended strenuous efforts to improve the quality of life of many of Jordan's physically and mentally disabled, addressed Saturday's gathering at the Royal Cultural Centre, praising

Princess Sarvath's efforts in maintaining the YMWA as a "cultural and humanitarian landmark to serve people with special needs on the local, Arab and regional level."

Later Princess Sarvath distributed awards to representatives of various institutions and diplomatic missions as well as individuals in appreciation of their support to the association.

Among the award recipients were HRH Crown Prince Hassan and Prince Ra'd. At the end of the ceremony, Prince Hassan and Princess Sarvath inaugurated the Ceramics, Weaving and Woodwork Exhibition, which displays the work of the Centre for Special Education, the Sheltered Workshop and the Princess Sarvath Community College.

The three-day exhibition includes educational tools and curricula that were locally developed by the Centre for Special Education in order to help teachers in dealing with students with learning difficulties.

The 25th anniversary ceremony was attended by several Royal family members, senior officials and friends of the YMWA.

Mamser details social development evaluation during Cabinet session

AMMAN (Petra) — The regular Cabinet session listened to Minister of Social Development Muhammad Mamser present the outline of a study prepared by his ministry on social work in the Kingdom, its objectives, programmes, and the current social situation, as well as activities undertaken by the ministry in conjunction with voluntary societies in dealing with poverty, disabilities, social defence issues, local communities' welfare, and children and families.

In his briefing, Dr. Mamser said Jordan currently has 47 official and voluntary local and foreign organisations working together with the ministry to carry out charitable activities.

He told the Cabinet that this year's allocations for general social work in the Kingdom amounted to JD100 million, 60 per cent of which came from the government and official organisations and the rest from non-governmental and voluntary groups.

The minister stated that although the cooperation between the government and the non-governmental

groups is good, there is need for further efforts at the national level to fight poverty and provide care and rehabilitation for the poorer sectors of the public.

The minister said all data on social work in the Kingdom will be submitted at a national conference on social work, which is slated for December, adding that his ministry has set up seven committees to conduct a study of the available data.

The council also listened to a report by Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources Muhammad

Saleh Horani on his visit to Egypt, where he took part in a meeting by Arab ministers responsible for electricity and energy.

Dr. Horani stated that among the main topics discussed was the question of linking the national electric grids of the Arab states, adding that the national electric networks of Egypt and Jordan are to be linked toward the end of this year.

He said the ministers also discussed cooperation among Arab states in electricity-related matters.

Standards institute's development seminar opens today

AMMAN (J.T.) — General Director of the Jordan Institution for Standards and Metrology (JISM) Hassan Saudi will today inaugurate a "development seminar," dealing with the improvement of service-orientation of JISM toward industry, a press release announced Saturday.

The seminar is organised by JISM in cooperation with the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) and will last from Sept. 28 until Oct. 1, the statement continued.

The seminar aims at following up the achievements of a similar seminar held a year ago, with the stated intention of improving the organisation's general performance in order to contribute effectively to make Jordanian products competitive, and to keep up with steps taken to join the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the partnership with the European Union (EU), the announcement read.

The seminar's participants are German and Jordanian experts in the field of management techniques, in addition to eight JISM top management staff members, the statement continued.

The Metrology, Standardisation, Testing and Quality Management (MSTQ) Project is a joint Jordanian-German project, the goal of which is to promote a "National System for MSTQ" in Jordan, according to the statement.

This system is considered as the basis and infrastructure for high quality Jordanian products and promotes international trade relations by removing technical barriers to trade in accordance with the WTO and General Agreement of Tariffs and Trade's (GATT) requirements in this regard, the statement concluded.

Prime minister arrives in Oman on official visit

MUSCAT (Petra) — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali arrived Saturday in Muscat on a three-day official visit to Oman, during which he will relay a message from His Majesty King Hussein to Sultan Qaboos Ben Saeed.

Dr. Majali is also expected to sign a number of bilateral agreements in the fields of education, higher education, and health.

Dr. Majali's scheduled talks with senior Omani officials will focus on means of developing bilateral ties, as well as the latest developments in the Middle East, particularly the peace process, pan-Arab and regional issues, and topics of concern to both countries.

Upon his arrival, Dr. Majali, accompanied by Minister of Education and

Higher Education Munther Masri and Minister of Health and Medical Care Ashraf Kurdi, was received by Sultan Qaboos' Special Advisor Thweini Ben Shehab Al Saeed and other Omani officials.

A Royal Decree was issued Saturday appointing Abdullah Ensour as acting prime minister during Dr. Majali's absence.

Agricultural bank plan awaits government endorsement

AMMAN (Petra) — The Agricultural Credit Corporation (ACC) has prepared a draft project to transform itself into a full agricultural bank in compliance with the government's directives, but the draft project will have to be endorsed by the Council of Ministers and debated by Parliament before it is implemented.

The announcement was made Saturday by ACC Director General Omar Nabulsi, who noted that the creation of the agricultural bank will be in line with the ongoing economic restructuring programme of the Kingdom.

The agricultural bank is expected to function more efficiently to help the agricultural sector arrange loans to farmers and collect dues, he explained.

Since its establishment in 1960, Mr. Nabulsi stated, the ACC has provided loans totalling JD202.3 million to 127,000 farmers and land owners to finance land reclamation, plant fruit trees, set up poultry farms, build farm buildings, and undertake other relevant projects.

ACC has given 4,283 farmers a total of JD11 million through its 20 branches around the country, he continued.

He added that the ACC has over this period collected JD13.5 million in dues from farmers who borrowed in the past.

Stating that he submitted a report on ACC performance to the Council of Ministers during last Tuesday's session, Mr. Nabulsi said he hoped that the ACC will collect JD20 million from farmers by the end of this year.

Children's literature, creative development focus of cultural event

By Nadia Mukhlis
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — "Children's Literature: The Experiment and Creativity" is the title of this year's Sixth Cultural Reunion, which opens tomorrow at the Royal Cultural Centre (RCC).

The reunion, held under the patronage of Her Majesty Queen Noor, takes place annually to encourage children to produce their own works and expose them to the cultures of neighbouring Arab countries, officials at the Ministry of Culture said.

Arab participants will include representatives from Iraq, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Tunisia, and Lebanon.

The roles of the media and educational system in raising the awareness in children's literature, educational programmes in schools to encourage children's creativity, and television and radio to benefit children's literature are other subjects to be discussed, he added.

Certificates of creativity will be distributed to children at the closing session to show gratitude and encourage them to work hard and to continue producing their works, he explained.

The reunion aims to allow children to express themselves freely in the form of art and build a future vision that allows them to view life in better and unrestricted perspectives, he concluded.

International press freedom groups urge government to rescind weeklies' suspensions

AMMAN (J.T.) — Two international press freedom organisations yesterday urged the government to reverse its decision to suspend 13 weekly newspapers, a decision announced by the Ministry of Information last week and effective as of Sept. 23.

Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF) and the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), press freedoms groups based in Paris and New York respectively, sent written statements to His

Majesty King Hussein and concerned officials asking them to reverse the decision and rescind amendments made last May to the 1993 Press and Publications Law in order to "bring Jordan's regulation of the press in accordance with international standards."

The CPJ said it viewed the government's enforcement of the amended provisions of the Press and Publications Law "as clear violations of the right of journalists to seek, receive,

and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers" as guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Jordan is a state party.

RSF recommended that the government "pass a new code promoting press freedom drawn up in consultation with journalists and media professionals."

"Such consultation," RSF wrote, "should help avoid

future excesses of an ethical nature, of which some Jordanian newspapers have been guilty."

The government has maintained that the strict measures embodied in the new amendments, which eventually led to the closure of the 13 weeklies, were introduced to ensure responsible journalism, particularly among the ranks of weekly newspapers.

Jordan Times Fax # 696-183

WHAT'S GOING ON

DARAT AL FUNUN SUMMER '97 FESTIVAL

- * Lecture entitled "Visual Artistic Language Selected from Ready-made Natural Elements" (shedding light on the experience of geologist Ibrahim Dwairi) at 7:00 p.m.
- * Graphics by Rafa Nasiri of Iraq, Ziad Dalfoul of Syria, and Najia Mehadiji at the South Hall.
- * Paintings by Jordanian artist Mohammad Qailoka at the Middle Hall.
- * Sculpture, drawings, and paintings by Jordanian artist Rajwa Ali.
- * Works by contemporary Arab artists at the Blue House.
- * Paintings by children of Zarqa reflecting on the problem of pollution at the Byzantine church.

CONCERT

- * Musical performance by the orchestra of the National Music Conservatory at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

DIALOGUE

- * Open dialogue with Iraqi artist Rafa Nasiri entitled "Graphic Art and Artists' Books" (followed by the signing ceremony

of Moroccan artist Najia Mehadiji's graphic book "In the Footsteps of Empedocle," Part III - Mineral, inspired by Petra, with poems by French poet Pascal Amel) at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh, at 6:30 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

- * Quilt exhibition "Piecing It Together" by Ms. Virginia Harris at the American Center, Abdoun, until Oct. 1
- * Display of products by the Young Muslim Women's Association at the Royal Cultural Centre, until Sept. 29
- * Paintings by Fatima El-Helou at Institut Cervantes, Jabal Amman, until Oct. 4
- * "The Projects of the Essence: Aspects of Italian Painting in the 90s" at the Royal Cultural Centre, until Oct. 2
- * Works by Khleef Mahmoud Khleef at Hamourabi Art Gallery, Gardens Street, until Oct. 2 (Tel. 5536098).
- * Paintings exhibition entitled "La Radioactive" at the French Cultural Centre, until Sept. 30
- * Paintings by Palestinian artists entitled "Palestine the Reality and the Dream" at the Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts, until Oct. 2 (except Tuesdays).

Visiting European delegation stresses need for local economic, social committee for EU partnership

By Hind-Lara Mango
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A delegation of the Economic and Social Committee (ESC) of the European Communities emphasised the need for the establishment of an economic and social committee in Jordan and highlighted the role of civil society in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP).

During their four-day working visit to the Kingdom, which ended on Friday, the ESC spoke with officials from civil society, including representatives from the General Syndicate of Agricultural Products Traders and the General Federation of Jordanian Trade Unions.

Mr. Briesch, the head of the ESC delegation to Amman and president of the committee's EuroMed follow-up group.

Mr. Briesch told the Jordan Times that their "mission in Amman was in line with the Euro-Mediterranean partnership initiated in Barcelona in 1995. We wanted to discuss its implementation at the socio-professional level."

He added that "the ESC also wanted to inform Jordan of the third Euro-Mediterranean summit to take place in Casablanca in November and to invite Jordanians, particularly those from the socio-professional level, to participate in this very important event."

He said the ESC would negotiate the funding for such ventures with the European Commission, he added.

Under the economic and financial pillars of the EMP, it is stipulated that an appropriate institutional and regulatory framework for a market economy be established.

"The ESC has been working on institutionalising a common system of standards for a long time, since the partnership stresses quality control," Mr. Briesch explained.

"We have to build a joint programme for real cooperation between the ESC and Jordan to ensure that when the free trade area is established in 2010, we are working with common standards," he stressed.

The third pillar of the Barcelona Declaration is the human and cultural dimension, which stipulates closer cooperation in the area of illegal immigration within the EMP.

Migration is a topic of concern for the ESC and was discussed at the second summit in Paris in 1996, Mr. Briesch said.

Uncontrolled migration to Europe has resulted in several negative developments, especially considering unemployment problems in several European countries, he said.

The head of the ESC noted that such consequences have been the mushrooming of xenophobia and racism in France and Germany.

One of the objectives of the Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreements is the economic development of the Mediterranean, since "Europe believes that this will create more job opportunities in the region and thus hinder the flow of migration to Europe," Mr. Briesch stated.

More tremors shake as Italy surveys wreckage

ASSISI, Italy (R) — Fresh tremors shook central Italy Saturday as the region faced the wreckage of twin earthquakes that killed 11 people and ravaged priceless art treasures in the Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi.

Residents of the hilltop town which gave Italy its patron saint felt two tremors at 7 a.m. (0500 GMT) and 8 a.m. (0600 GMT) and officials said there had been more than 40 small shocks since the first of two devastating quakes Friday.

It was not immediately clear how strong the tremors were but no damage was reported. Officials said aftershocks were likely to continue for some time.

Thousands of people spent the night outdoors, too afraid to return to their homes even if they had not been badly damaged.

"I haven't slept for two nights. I'm too scared to sleep at home. I left just wearing this. I don't have anything," 70-year-old Clara Paolucci, clad in her dressing gown, told Reuters Television from one of two "tent cities" in Assisi.

Vincenzo Carlucci, 60, slept with his wife and three children in cars. "Luckily nothing happened to my house yesterday but I felt happier sleeping outside," he said.

Some 5,000 people in the mountainous area that straddles the Umbria and Marche regions took temporary shelter outside for fear of more tremors. In the Marche, at

least 27 mountain towns were badly damaged and residents camped out in the cold.

Antonio Paolucci, superintendent for cultural affairs in Florence, visited the basilica early Saturday and declared the damage akin to the devastation wreaked by World War II bombs on the cities of Padua and Pisa in 1944.

He said he had not been able to go inside as officials had barred everyone, including firefighters, from the basilica for five days until scaffolding was erected to make it safe.

But he said that from a cursory glance "there is tens of billions of lire (millions of dollars) damage."

Two huge chunks of the vaulted and frescoed ceiling of the basilica of St. Francis, an architectural jewel, collapsed when the second quake struck at 11.42 a.m. (0942 GMT) Friday.

It measured 5.6 on the Richter Scale and hit as some 20 people were inspecting the damage from a quake measuring 5.5 that shook central Italy at 2.33 a.m. (0033 GMT).

Four people, including two Franciscan monks, were killed in the basilica as the mountains of rubble rained down and sent up a cloud of white dust visible from the plain below.

The collapse destroyed a fresco attributed to the artist Cimabue and part of another attributed to the school of Giotto, but the most famous and most holy parts of the

13th century pink-stoned church appeared to have escaped major damage.

Firefighters put plastic sheets over the tonnes of painted stone ruins heaped on the grass in front of the basilica in hope restorers would be able to use the debris in reconstruction.

The mayor of Assisi, Giorgio Bartolini, vowed to restore the basilica by the year 2000, which Pope John Paul has declared a holy year, or jubilee, to herald the third millennium.

"We promise to be ready for the year 2000. We will rebuild the basilica," he said.

Mr. Paolucci said it was vital to cover the brick-sized pieces more securely "because if it rains, they will be ruined."

But he said it may already be too late to resurrect the damaged frescoes. "I believe that little of these can be saved," he said, indicating the Cimabue and Giotto fragments.

Bruno Zanardi, who has been involved with restoration work in the basilica for more than 20 years, shared his pessimism.

"The vaults fell from a height of about 20 metres and were reduced to a mass of rubble," he told La Stampa daily.

"The idea of reconstructing the original image from that ocean of fragments is highly improbable. We'd need a miracle."

The most famous frescoes — those painted by Giotto on

the side walls depicting scenes from the life of St. Francis who talked to animals and referred to the sun as "brother" and the moon as "sister" — survived cracked but largely intact.

Giotto, generally credited with sowing the seeds of the Italian renaissance, painted the frescoes in the early 14th century. They attract millions of tourists each year to Assisi, whose name is synonymous with peace and brotherhood.

The tomb of St. Francis, revered founder of the Franciscan Order, is in the lower part of the basilica and was not damaged.

Mr. Paolucci said the British Museum had volunteered restorers to help free of charge with the repairs, and said no effort should be spared to have the basilica restored by the year 2000.

"This is the most important objective of the Jubilee. This is a sacred site, it is the most important of all Italy because St. Francis is the patron saint of Italy," he said. "It is more important than St. Peter's."

Prime Minister Romano Prodi visited Assisi Friday and promised some \$30 million in reconstruction aid for the regions of Umbria and Marche, hardest hit by the two earthquakes.

Italy is jolted by earthquakes on a regular basis. The last major earthquake killed about 2,570 people on Nov. 23, 1980, and devastated large parts of the southern regions of Campania and Basilicata.



A fireman sifts through the rubble of a house which collapsed in an earthquake in central Italy. Two people living in the house in the village of Collecureti were killed (Reuters photo)

Bangladesh cyclone death toll reaches 22

DHAKA (R) — At least 22 people were killed Saturday when a cyclone and tidal wave swept into Bangladesh from the Bay of Bengal, the Bangladesh News Agency (BSS) said.

Eighteen of the deaths were reported in the southern coastal district of Bhola alone, the agency said, quoting local officials.

With rescuers still trying to reach several islands swamped by the surging waters, disaster management officials said the death toll might increase.

But they said the final death toll was likely to be lower than in previous cyclones because of large-scale evacuations from coastal areas and outlying islands.

Nearly 100 people were injured, and fishermen's association officials said some 50 fishing trawlers with more than 700 people on board had yet to return from the turbulent bay.

"It is very difficult to tell their fate at the moment. We will have to wait for them for at least 24 hours," said one. Authorities in Bhola district said the storm triggered a 1.5-metre tidal surge, destroyed 80 per cent of houses, uprooted trees and

snapped power and phone lines.

Most of the deaths were caused by drowning, including three on a small boat which sank near the coast at Char Borhanuddin.

Officials in Cox's Bazar, bordering Burma, said a boy drowned when he fell from a boat evacuating people from an offshore island.

Another drowned near Manpara Island while trying to board a fishing trawler ferrying people to the mainland.

Four villagers died when their flimsy homes collapsed in the storm which carried winds of up to 150 kph (90 mph).

Bhola Deputy Commissioner Abdul Mannan said the death toll might be lower than previously feared, but there had been extensive damage to property.

"Communications have been badly affected as fallen trees have blocked roads," Mr. Mannan said, adding that it would take time to reach an exact death toll or assess economic and crop damage.

The officials said nearly 100 people, including 30 in Manpara, were injured either by collapsing houses

or falling trees.

Weather forecasters said the storm had now weakened into a depression over the northern part of Chittagong district and northeast India.

Officials in Chittagong Port said the army and navy were on their way to small islands in the Bay of Bengal for rescue and relief operations. More than one million islanders had been evacuated before the storm, they said.

The port itself and shipping suffered no major harm.

"I must say the Almighty Allah has saved us this time," BSS quoted a relief control room official as saying.

At least 111 people were killed in May when a 200 kph (125 mph) cyclone hit the coast, causing damage estimated at five billion taka (\$112 million).

Bangladesh's worst cyclone in living memory killed at least 138,000 people in 1991, according to official figures.

Meanwhile, authorities in eastern India were on high alert as the death toll there following torrential rains rose to 32.

Witness says Diana's car was driving safely

NEW YORK (R) — A man riding in a taxicab that was passed by Princess Diana's car before it crashed in Paris said her car was not traveling at an unsafe speed.

In an interview with CBS News aired Friday, California businessman Brian Anderson said Diana's Mercedes was traveling at about 70 mph (110 kph) that night and was being closely followed by two motorcycles.

"My perception as a lay person was the car was not travelling at an unsafe speed," Mr. Anderson said.

He said the first motorcycle had two people on it and was the more aggressive, heading "in a direction to get in front of the car."

"I felt that the one motorcycle, certainly without hesitation and any doubt whatsoever, was driving aggressively and dangerously."

Nine photographers and a photo agency motorcyclist face possible charges of manslaughter and failing to help accident victims in connection with the Aug. 31 crash in which Diana, her companion Dodi Fayed, and driver Henri Paul died.

French authorities are investigating whether the photographers contributed to the high-speed crash by chasing the princess' car, and whether they took pictures afterward rather than alert emergency services and help the victims.

Mr. Anderson's account put the motorcycle-riding paparazzi much closer to Diana's car than the photographs and their attorneys, CBS said.

Mr. Anderson told CBS he lost sight of Diana's car for a few moments, and then heard a tremendous crash.

"I looked up and saw an object cross ... the front of the car, at some distance, hitting the wall. It took a second to register that it was an automobile," he said.

French police questioned Mr. Anderson over several days about the accident and he expects to speak with them again, CBS said.

"I only saw this bit. There are professionals that are looking at the entire spectrum of the events and I will trust that they will discover what the cause was. I don't know."

French police questioned Mr. Anderson over several days about the accident and he expects to speak with them again, CBS said.

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Burma opposition seeks dialogue with junta

RANGOON (R) — Burmese opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi called Saturday for dialogue with the ruling military Junta as her National League for Democracy Party (NLD) opened a key two-day special meeting without incident.

The meeting marks the ninth anniversary of the party's founding, and was held with the blessing of the ruling State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) — in sharp contrast to a year ago.

The military government thwarted a similar meeting planned by the NLD on Sept. 28 and 29 last year by detaining over 400 delegates in different regions to prevent them from attending.

In May this year, regional authorities prevented about 100 NLD delegates from attending a meeting to mark the seventh anniversary of the general election held in 1990, which the party swept but the ruling military never recognised.

Political analysts and diplomats said the SLORC allowed the meeting to take place this time because it did not want to provoke Western criticism by creating any incidents.

"The NLD is trying to create something out of this meeting, but I don't think the SLORC will allow itself to be provoked by the opposition and create trouble," said one Asian diplomat.

Burmese Foreign Minister

Ohn Gyaw is attending the U.N. General Assembly and the SLORC did not want to tarnish its image at this critical time, the analysts said.

Burma's presence at a meeting of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) forum next year in London is uncertain because it was not included in the pioneer meeting held in Bangkok last year.

Some members of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) are lobbying for Burma, which joined the Asian regional grouping this year, to attend the ASEM session.

Analysts said this may be another reason why Burma may be taking a softer line on the opposition.

On Saturday, Ms. Suu Kyi told about 700 delegates who gathered in a makeshift tent in the compound of her lakeside residence in Rangoon that dialogue with the military government would be successful if it was based on "sincerity and mutual respect."

"NLD is ready to hold meaningful dialogue with the government based on sincerity, mutual respect and intention to work for the benefit of the people," she said.

"We believe the dialogue will succeed without fail if it is based on these principles," she added, in renewing her call for discussions.

The NLD has been at loggerheads with the SLORC over human rights abuses, repression and the military's

curbs on its political activities.

Earlier this month, a meeting sought by the SLORC's powerful secretary one Lieutenant General Khin Nyunt with senior NLD leaders failed to take place because the NLD insisted Ms. Suu Kyi should be present.

The SLORC does not recognise Ms. Suu Kyi's opposition role and did not invite her to the proposed meeting.

The military Saturday conducted tight security checks of delegates at checkpoints along University Avenue where Ms. Suu Kyi resides.

There were no incidents, although the SLORC had originally limited the number of participants to the meeting to 300 and more than double the number turned up.

The two-day meeting will review the party's activities and lay down future plans and policies.

Meanwhile, Burma's foreign minister Friday likened the West to a quack doctor delivering the wrong diagnosis on human rights in his country.

Addressing the U.N. General Assembly, Ohn Gyaw said that Burma enjoyed higher economic growth and more basic human rights and security now than at any time in its post-independence history.

"Those Western countries turn a blind eye to all these positive developments and

accomplishments by the government in my country and indulge in the ritual of unfounded fabricated charges against my country," he said.

"Their ignoring of the realities and misjudgment may be likened to that of a quack doctor who ignores the fact that the patient is a man and makes a gynaecological diagnosis on him," he told the assembly. "A man must not be accused or censured for the offenses he has not committed."

He said the West had politicised human rights questions, used double standards and singled out Burma for censure.

The SLORC has been accused by the United Nations and many Western governments of widespread abuses, including summary executions, forced labour and continued arbitrary arrests of opposition politicians.

The United States earlier this year imposed economic sanctions against Burma because of its rights record, including a ban on new U.S. investments.

Mr. Ohn Gyaw also told the assembly during his annual debate that his government had been in the forefront of the war against drugs, citing campaigns the army had conducted in chasing drug traffickers and destroying opium poppy fields.

Committee, accused NASA of acting "negligently" and said Mr. Goldin would be asked to appear before the committee.

This year, the Mir has suffered a fire, a collision that knocked a hole in its side, life support system failures and numerous computer breakdowns. But Russian space officials insist it is still spaceworthy and, so far, NASA officials have agreed.

On Friday, NASA spokesman Rob Navis said all systems on Mir were "operating flawlessly and are expected to maintain their pristine condition through the docking."

Russian flight controllers said the Mir crew was in "great spirits" as they awaited the arrival of their U.S. counterparts, who will come loaded with gifts. Among

them are 635 kilograms of water, a new central computer, batteries for the Mir power supply, and equipment for a possible fix of the hole from the June 25 collision with a resupply ship.

It is the longest list of supplies ever brought to Mir by the Atlantis, which was docked with the space station six previous times, Mr. Navis said.

After the docking, scheduled for 3:55 p.m. EDT (2055 GMT), the two crews were to undergo a 90-minute safety briefing — described as "routine procedure" by NASA officials — share a meal, then go to sleep on their respective spaceships.

Foale and Walker were to officially exchange places Sunday morning, Mr. Navis said.

Greece backs EU membership for Cyprus

UNITED NATIONS (R) — Greek Foreign Minister Theodoros Pangalos Friday asserted his unwavering support for Cyprus' membership in the European Union (EU).

In a speech to the United Nations General Assembly dealing at length with Greek-Turkish differences, Mr. Pangalos said: "Greece supports unwaveringly Cyprus' accession process to the EU, which will commence at the near future."

Membership of Cyprus in the EU would benefit all the island's inhabitants and "may also act as a catalyst for the solution of the political problem," he said, referring to decades-long efforts by the United Nations to reunite the divided island in a federation.

Turkey says the Greek Cypriot-led government in

Nicosia cannot speak for the Turkish Cypriots, who set up their own breakaway government in 1983.

Ankara says Cyprus cannot join the EU, of which Greece but not Turkey is a member, until the division of the island has been resolved.

Mr. Pangalos omitted a passage in his prepared text charging that "Turkey, in its quest for regional hegemony, opposes accession, holding the entire people of Cyprus hostage to its blackmailing policy."

He continued: "We sincerely hope that Turkey will eventually realise the benefits of Cyprus' accession to the EU, especially for the Turkish Cypriot population, and will change its present rejectionist stance."

However, Mr. Pangalos had other harsh words for his

neighbour. He said Greece's relations with Turkey had taken another downturn since 1996, "when our neighbour added direct territorial claims to the existing policy of demands, threats of war and constant pressure."

In an attempt to subvert the territorial status quo established more than 70 years ago, "Her attempt to back these claims by military means in January 1996 resulted in a crisis that fell short of war," he said. Greece and Turkey came close to war last year over an uninhabited islet in the eastern Aegean. They pulled back their warships after U.S. intervention.

Mr. Pangalos and Turkey's Foreign Minister Ismail Cem have held two meetings on the fringes of the General Assembly meeting but failed to reach any breakthroughs.

New Thai charter passed; premier wins

charter passed; premier wins

censure vote

BANGKOK (R) — Thailand's embattled Prime Minister Chavalit Yongchaiyudh won a crucial vote of confidence Saturday from parliament, which also overwhelmingly approved a new reformist constitution.

Mr. Chavalit survived the opposition censure motion in the elected lower house, as expected, while the draft constitution, which enjoys broad public support, sailed through a joint session of the upper and lower houses.

The defeat of the censure vote was crucial as the administration seeks to resolve the country's worst economic crisis in decades, analysts said.

Mr. Chavalit's nine-month-old, six-party coalition defeated the censure motion with a 212-170 vote margin in the 393-seat lower house. Eleven members did not vote.

The opposition had accused him of incompetence and economic mismanagement.

The new charter, aimed at ending decades of rampant money politics and political patronage, won the backing of 578 votes, with 16 against and 17 abstentions.

Thousands of pro-constitution supporters gathered at a public square at Sanam Luang in Bangkok and other parts of the country screamed with delight, sparking fire crackers and waving flags, on hearing of the charter's approval.

"This is a historic day for the nation when the people finally have their own constitution," said Phipp Thongchai, leader of a pro-charter rally at Sana Luang.

"We praise the members of parliament for their sincere contribution to political reform," said the democracy movement in a statement.

The new charter, requiring the assent of Thai King Bhumibol Adulyadej, calls for a revamp of the electoral system and would require cabinet ministers to resign their seats if they were elected as members of parliament.

The reforms aim to reduce the role of vested interests and money in the political decision making process.

Research estimates for last November's elections showed politicians spent millions of dollars to get elected.

Mr. Chavalit was reluctant initially to accept the new charter, but bowed to pressure from the military and his coalition government partners.

Analysts expect Mr. Chavalit to follow the lead of the military and take action to tackle the economic turmoil which triggered the \$17.2 billion rescue package put together by the International Monetary Fund.

Space shuttle chases Mir for controversial link-up

HOUSTON (R) — The shuttle Atlantis gave chase Friday to the Russian space station Mir ahead of a controversial rendezvous to drop off U.S. astronaut David Wolf.

Both spacecraft were said to be sailing smoothly along more than 320 kilometres above the Earth where they were to link up Saturday afternoon. As of late Friday, Atlantis was 2,400 kilometres behind Mir and closing in at a rate of 272 kilometres per orbit.

Astronauts on the shuttle, which launched Thursday night from Cape Canaveral, Florida, tested equipment that will be used during the docking operation, including laser rangefinders and a spindly, metallic docking ring that poked up from Atlantis' cargo bay.

"Everything checked out

just fine," flight director Paul Dye told reporters at Johnson Space Centre. "We expect to be docked and opening the hatch sometime in the early or mid-afternoon."

Wolf was to replace Michael Foale, a British-born American astronaut who has survived one crisis after another since boarding the 11-year-old Mir in May.

Critics in the U.S. Congress tried to stop Wolf's mission and urged an end to U.S. involvement with the Mir, but NASA Administrator Daniel Goldin gave Wolf the go-ahead just hours before Thursday's launch. He said the mission posed no "unnecessary peril."

Rep. James Sensenbrenner, a Wisconsin Republican who chairs the House of Representatives Science

Committee, accused NASA of acting "negligently" and said Mr. Goldin would be asked to appear before the committee.

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Indonesian rescuers search for bodies amongst the wreckage of an Air Garuda A-300 Airbus that crashed near Medan in northern Sumatra with the loss of all 234 passengers and crew aboard. The cause of Indonesia's worst ever air crash was not immediately known (Reuters photo)

Probe of Indonesian air crash begins as body recovery starts

JAKARTA (AFP) — Indonesian authorities were investigating Saturday whether poor visibility from haze caused by forest fires contributed to the crash of a Garuda Airlines jet, killing all 234 people on board, reports and officials said Saturday.

Before losing contact with air traffic control at Medan's Polonia Airport on Sumatra Island, the pilot had asked for landing guidance as he was having visibility problems due to haze, the state Antara news agency said.

Transportation Minister Haryanto Dhanutirto cited witnesses as saying the plane was last seen flying at low altitude and hitting some trees before it went down in a ravine near the village of Buah Nabar, about 40 kilometres south-west of Medan.

Medan airport was closed Saturday because of poor visibility, officials said. Much of South East Asia is blanketed by acid smog haze from the Indonesian fires. Authorities in Malaysia said the haze also could have contributed to a collision of two ships in the smog-filled Straits of Malacca Friday in which twenty-eight crewmen were

missing. The Garuda's flight data recorder, which could hold the key to determining the cause of the crash, have not been found, said Lieutenant Colonel B.S. Dandeld, the head of the Medan Air Base.

Garuda President Supandi late Friday refused to speculate whether the tragedy was caused by the haze. "The causes of the accident are being investigated, whether it was caused by smoke or not," he said.

A Garuda official said Friday that Flight GA-152 from Jakarta to Medan had 222 passengers on board, including two infants, and a crew of 12, none of whom survived.

Efforts to recover bodies and flight recorders were complicated Saturday by the thick haze, as family members began collecting the remains.

Garuda official Eddy Paswardi said from Medan, North Sumatra, that most of the bodies had been found but that recovery efforts were being complicated by inclement weather conditions.

"The haze is very thick and visibility is around 400 metres. The road near the accident site is also very slippery after the rains last night," Mr. Paswardi told AFP.

He said more than 200 people had joined in search efforts which had yet to turn up the aircraft's black box. The Antara news agency cited the Transportation Ministry's secretary general, Muchtarudin Siregar, as saying 104 of the bodies had been identified as of Saturday afternoon.

The news agency also said, without citing sources, that the navigational system used on the plane was out of date.

An employee at Medan's Adam Malik Hospital who identified himself only as Irma said that by midday Saturday 24 corpses had arrived at the hospital's morgue.

"There are more than a hundred of the victims' relatives here, most of them crying and very emotional," Ms. Irma said.

Mr. Siregar said more than 200 family members had registered and were ready to be flown to Medan to identify the dead once the airport reopened.

Garuda said hazy conditions early Saturday forced a 6:30 a.m. (1030 GMT) flight from Jakarta to Medan — the same route

taken by the plane that crashed — to turn back in mid-flight.

Jakarta's airport was filled with grieving relatives, some crying and in shock, waiting for a flight to Medan.

"I'm in shock. I was the one who took my niece to the airport yesterday," said a sobbing Tur Simanjuntak of her 23-year-old niece, Ester Simanjuntak, one of the passengers on the ill-fated flight.

When asked whether her family planned to take any action against the airline, she only said that "we are still too sad to think about anything else."

At least 18 foreigners were among the victims, including Americans, Dutch, French, Germans, Japanese and one Belgian.

A Dutch embassy source told AFP that two Dutch nationals were on board and an official from the British embassy said there was one Briton on the plane.

Three French nationals were on the flight, according to Foreign Ministry officials in Paris.

The crash was the fourth air disaster in Indonesia this year and the worst in the country's aviation history.

India examining body to see if it belongs to hostage

SRINAGAR, India (R) — Indian forensic experts will examine a body exhumed in the Kashmir region to determine if it is of one of four Western hostages missing for more than two years, a senior police officer said Saturday.

The police officer, who did not wish to be identified, said the body had been flown to the western Indian city of Ahmedabad for tests at the central forensic laboratory.

"It was on a specific information that we exhumed a body from Akingam village and our experts are examining it," Gurbachan Jagat, director-general of the Jammu and Kashmir State Police, told Reuters late Friday.

Police exhumed the body Thursday from Akingam village in Kashmir's Anantnag Valley after a captured militant said during interrogation that it was the body of one of the hostages.

Anantnag is about 50 kilometres south of Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir.

"We have no definite proof whether the body is of one of the hostages. It is a skeleton and we have asked experts from outside to conduct a DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid) test on the body," Jagat said.

"It will take a few days for identification," Mr. Jagat said. Britain's Press Association news agency said earlier Saturday that forensic tests were being carried out to see whether the body was that of Paul Wells or Keith Mangan, the two Britons among the four missing Western hostages.

The Press Association said the families of the two men had been informed.

Wells and Mangan and Americans Donald Hutchings and John Childs were kidnapped by Al Faran militants while trekking in the Himalayan state of Jammu and Kashmir.

Four days later, Childs escaped. On the same day, the captors abducted German Dirk Hasert and Norwegian Hans Christian Ostro. Ostro was later found beheaded.

The Press Association quoted the hostages in Kashmir campaign, a group founded by Mangan's wife, Julie, as saying reports the body was that of Wells were pure speculation.

"During the last two days a body was recovered from Akingam in Indian-occupied Kashmir... the grave was identified by captured militants," the group said in a statement.

The group's scepticism was echoed by residents of Akingam village who told reporters that the body was of a militant who died 21 months ago in a gunbattle.

29 missing as ships collide in smog-filled Malacca Straits

KUALA LUMPUR (AFP) — Twenty-nine crewmen were missing after an Indian-registered cargo ship capsized after colliding with another vessel in the smog-filled Straits of Malacca, officials said Saturday.

Five survivors were found from the 34-strong crew of the M.V. Vickraman, which collided with the St. Vincent-registered Mount One around 11 p.m. (1500 GMT) Friday, said officials from Malaysia's Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC) in Port Klang south of here.

"Going by the thick haze prevailing in the region, the collision could have taken place due to that problem but investigations are not over," Roslee Mat Yusof, duty officer at the MRCC told AFP by telephone.

There were no casualties on the Mount One which was slightly damaged, he said.

The narrow and busy Malacca Straits straddle Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore have all been enveloped in thick smog caused by forest fires in Indonesia.

Investigations are also underway to find out whether the smog could have contributed to Friday's crash of a Garuda Airlines jet on the island of Sumatra in Indonesia, killing all 234 people on board.

Malaysia cancelled flights to six airports in the country Saturday owing to poor visibility caused by the haze. Officials said Malaysian Air Force and navy as well as the Marine Police and the Marine Department were engaged in joint operations to rescue the missing crewmen, all Indian nationals.

The five surviving crewmen of the Indian vessel were plucked to safety by a Thai merchant vessel, M.V. Laemthong Glory, and the Royal Malaysian Navy's K.D. Lekir which went to the rescue after receiving a distress signal.

Survivors were being ferried to Port Klang, by a Marine Department vessel. Officials said the Vickraman was on its way from Antwerp in Belgium to Kaohsiung in Taiwan when the accident took place, six nautical miles from Tanjung Tuan in the southern beach resort of Port Dickson.

Some 30,000 ships ply the perilous Straits of Malacca annually and last year alone, 92 accidents were reported. Malaysia recently warned ships without proper navigation equipment to keep away from the straits due to the thick grey haze choking the region and hampering air and sea traffic.

Air flights Saturday meanwhile were cancelled to the airports of Penang, Alor Star, Langkawi, Kuala Terengganu, Ipoh and Kota Bharu in northern peninsular Malaysia because landings could be dangerous, officials said.

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Malaysia Airlines (MAS) said flights to the six destinations were cancelled until 6:00 p.m. (1000 GMT) Saturday.

Officials said airport authorities were unwilling to take chances with poor visibility even though the Air Pollutant Index (API) tracking air pollution levels had generally improved.

"Although the airport is equipped with electronic guidance devices to help planes take off and land, we prefer to take extra precautions," MAS Penang Station Manager Tengku Nasrudin Zainuddin said.

The pollution index in Sarawak, the east Malaysian state worst affected by the choking smog, fell to 139 early Saturday from a record high of 835 points Tuesday.

A level from 201 to 300 is "very unhealthy" and from 301 upwards is "hazardous."

Seberang Prai in the northern state of Penang is the only area where the pollution index hovered around the hazardous level, Environment Department officials said.

Taleban claim massive gains around opposition stronghold

KABUL (AFP) — Taliban forces have tightened their stranglehold on the opposition base of Mazar-e-Sharif with major gains to the west of the city, state-run Radio Shariat claimed Saturday.

The Taleban mouthpiece said key areas within 15 kilometres west of the only Afghan city not in their hands were seized following a major offensive.

"In a victorious operation vast areas were freed, including Qala-e-Janghi, areas of the thermal power factory, 18th division, Chermal district and some villages," the broadcast

said. No independent confirmation of the claim was immediately available.

"The mujahedin of the Islamic army are now fortifying their positions," the report added.

On Friday, independent sources said Taleban fighters were within 35 kilometres to the north and east of the city, but no reports on the current whereabouts of those frontlines were immediately available.

Mazar-e-Sharif, situated 310 kilometres north of Kabul, is the seat of the anti-Taleban alliances shadow government, has been under Taleban attack for three weeks.

Anti-Taleban forces include Shiite Muslim factions Hezb-e-Wahdat and Harakat-e-Islami, the ousted Kabul government and ethnic Uzbek fighters loyal to rival Uzbek warlord Abdul Rashid Dostum or Abdul Malik.

The Taleban hold around two thirds of Afghanistan including the capital Kabul which they seized one year ago, and have imposed a strict interpretation of Islamic law on areas they control.

Australian premier turns to sport for break from crisis

CANBERRA (R) — Embattled Australian leader John Howard took a break from the worst political crisis in his 18-month rule with a visit to a football final Saturday as conservative colleagues rallied to his support.

After dumping three ministers and two senior advisers in what he called "a horrible week," Mr. Howard appeared relaxed and jovial as he joined almost 100,000 football fans for the Australian rules football grand final at the Melbourne cricket ground in Australia's second biggest city.

"One of the real cultural experiences and delights of being prime minister of this fantastic country is the opportunity to savour grand final day in Melbourne and then go back to Sydney and go to the... (rugby league) grand final," said Mr. Howard, who will attend the league final Sunday.

In one of the worst weeks in Mr. Howard's chequered 23-year political career, three senior ministers quit in a scandal over mislaid travel allowances and Mr. Howard sacked two advisers for failing to warn him before the row became public.

Leading conservative politicians around the country closed ranks behind the prime minister and declared his position safe.

New South Wales state liberal opposition leader Peter Collins said Mr. Howard and his Liberal-National Coalition administration would be well regarded by history.

"He will be a distinguished prime minister," Mr. Collins told reporters in Sydney. Mr. Collins said there were no moves within the Liberal Party to dump Mr. Howard, who has also been dogged by resignation rumours.

U.S., Russia sign accords that could spur arms cuts

NEW YORK (R) — The United States, Russia and three other ex-Soviet states Friday signed a handful of arms agreements that could finally clear the way for a new round of radical reductions in strategic weapons.

Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov and counterparts from Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Belarus participated in the upbeat ceremony on the fringes of the U.N. General Assembly.

The accords "should pave the way for Russian Duma (parliament) ratification of the START-2 treaty that will trigger deep cuts in our nuclear arsenals," Ms. Albright said.

But critics like the union of concerned scientists say the agreements could thwart proposed reductions beyond START-2 and persuade countries with small nuclear arsenals like China to increase their stockpile.

The U.S. aim is to give Russia more confidence that if it commits to further reductions in strategic nuclear weapons, Washington will not try to gain new advantage by deploying missile defence systems that would undercut Moscow's remaining strategic arsenal.

Russia and the United States also signed a protocol extending from the beginning of 2003 to the end of 2007 — a deferral of five years — the period stipulated for implementation of the START-2 treaty.

Experts say this gives Russia "political breathing room" before it is forced to get rid of its most lethal weapons.

This provides time to evaluate the impact of NATO expansion — which Moscow fears — and the U.S. missile defence programme in the works for four years, last Aug. 21 in Geneva.

They aimed to address the spread of short-range ballistic missiles, dramatised by their use in the 1991 Gulf War in Iraq, and the increasingly popular development of systems designed to shoot them down.

The goal has been an accord that would permit so-called "Theatre" Anti-Missile Defence (TMD) systems without violating the 1972 U.S.-Soviet ABM treaty, which limits defences against long-range strategic missiles and has been considered an arms control cornerstone.

Last March's U.S.-Russia summit in Helsinki broke the logjam on the complex issue by setting limits

on the speed and range of target missiles to be used in testing theatre systems.

These were set at about five kilometres per second and about 3,500 kilometres respectively. Work since then has focused on turning that outline accord into agreed texts.

While the U.S. Senate has ratified the START-2 treaty, the Duma has held back over fears that Washington would break out of the ABM pact by deploying multiple anti-missile defensive systems.

Many Russians fear they could not compete financially with the Americans in building comparable anti-missile systems. Hence, they would be even more dependent on their nuclear stocks and less inclined to formally ratify START-2 because it codifies huge weapons reductions, experts say.

U.S. officials said this week they were freshly optimistic that with Friday's accords, President Boris Yeltsin would be in a position to push the START-2 treaty, a process that is now underway.

Mr. Primakov told President Bill Clinton that while ratification by the Duma remains difficult, he had some higher degree of optimism that it would happen, a senior U.S. official said.

Officials say the TMD accords will not prohibit any of the six U.S. missile defence programmes now being developed.

But some Republicans in Congress have objected to a clause that bans either side from developing, testing or deploying space-based interceptors, saying this would impede possible new technological breakthroughs.

Mr. Primakov said the accords marked a "radical success" that would determine the course of arms control for years to come.

But he and his counterparts from other ex-Soviet states stressed that the agreements did not resolve all disputes over the 1972 anti-ballistic missile treaty and that these serious problems must continue to be worked on.

The START-2 treaty, signed in 1993 but never put into effect, would slash U.S.-Russian long-range nuclear arsenals by up to two-thirds and deprive Moscow of its cherished and most powerful weapon — heavy missiles with multiple warheads.

Negotiators from the five countries completed the texts of the missile defence agreements.

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Netanyahu's move

THE ON and off talk in Israel about the possible formation of a national unity government comprising the ruling Likud and opposition Labour parties does not occur in a vacuum. Both Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Labour leader Ehud Barak have recently been talking about forging a united front to steer their country into the projected final status talks with the Palestinians. No doubt the Syrian and Lebanese fronts are equally on the minds of both parties as there is an increasing apprehension that without dealing with the Syrian track, there is no hope ever to ease tension on the Lebanese front where the toll on Israeli and Lebanese lives has been high.

On the surface of it both Netanyahu and Barak have to make compromises in their respective policies before they would consider more seriously the prospects of forming a national coalition government that would exclude the elements that caused the freezing of the peace process altogether. Netanyahu must have sensed by now that clinging to his hardline rhetoric of his election campaign would deprive Israel of both security and frustrate all efforts aimed at achieving peace in the region.

The bitter experiences of the past 18 months since the formation of the right-wing government must have convinced the Israeli prime minister that unless he jettisons the extremists from his team, the remaining two-and-a-half years of his rule would lead his country into a bigger mess on more than one front and deny his people the fruits of the early promises of the past peace accords.

Netanyahu must be engaged in soul-searching for a way out of the quagmire that he has led his country into. After pledging to secure peace based on security, he has failed to deliver on either count. The events and developments of the past months should convince everybody that a new path needs to be taken by Israel if it really wants to attain security and peace for its people. Anything short of that would be the exact prescription for more of the same that Israel has experienced over the past 16 months. Accordingly, the current U.S.-sponsored peace talks in Washington between Israel and the Palestinians cannot be expected to bear much fruit unless the political base of the Israeli government is broadened so that ultra-religious and extreme right-wing elements are effectively excluded from the decision-making process.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER for Al Ra'i Saturday demanded that the concerned authorities reveal all the details about the attack on the Israeli embassy officials and the assault on Khaled Mashaal, head of Hamas political bureau in Amman. Sultan Hattab said that within a single week, two attacks of a sinister nature occurred in Amman, with the official spokesman giving statements that do not disclose facts about the two incidents. The Jordanian public, after listening to the official spokesman, tuned in to news coming on satellite television channels to hear a totally contrary version about the two incidents, noted the writer. Jordanians, he said, are deeply concerned about these developments and fear that they might paint a gloomy image of the country; therefore, prompt action should be taken to put matters in their right perspective. The writer demanded that the government tell the public the truth about the situation and, at the same time, take some measures that can control the propagation of reports about events taking place in the country. He said that many of the satellite television channels reports lack credibility and tend to create real tension among the members of the Jordanian community.

A WRITER for Al Arab Al Yawm criticised the closure of weekly tabloids in Jordan, describing the move as an attempt to stifle freedom of the press. Calling the closure order as a black day in the life of journalism in Jordan, Taher Adwan said those who accused the weeklies of publishing sensational and inaccurate reports do not realise the fact that it was largely due to the publication of scandalous incidents, reports about murders and corruption and abuse of authority on the part of some officials that contributed towards curtailing criminal actions within the Jordanian society. Influential forces behind the closure of the weeklies have been accusing the tabloids of publishing reports and material which some consider as improper, but they tend to forget that the satellite television channels which are wide spread in Jordan present day and night all types of news and programmes which reach households, affecting the minds of children, continued the writer. He said that certain influential elements were behind the closure of the weeklies and behind pitting the government against their publishers with the purpose of protecting their own, selfish interests and in order to maintain an atmosphere which allows them to pursue their acts of corruption and consolidate their own position.

Sunday's Economic Pulse

Why devaluation rumours vanished

By Dr. Fahed Fanek

FOR ALMOST two years now we have not heard a single rumour about the possible devaluation of the Jordanian dinar. Before October 1995 such rumour would surface at least once every month. Two reasons complemented each other and caused the persisting rumour to vanish completely. The first is that the dinar was pegged to the dollar at a fixed rate of \$1.41 to the dinar, as of the end of October 1995. The second is the credibility the Central Bank established for itself while it endeavoured and managed to protect and preserve this rate of exchange.

Even those who used to promote the idea of an impending devaluation of the dinar — perhaps because they have a personal interest do so, having taken positions in dollars and other foreign currencies — or those who have reasons to destabilise the Jordanian economy and hurt the standing of the country, do not dare unleash the rumour anymore because they would be met with ridicule.

Starting with Oct. 31, 1995, and until the end of 1996, the value of the dinar, measured against the German mark, rose by 10.3 per cent. It rose by 13.9 per cent compared to the Japanese yen. Since the beginning of this year, until last week, the value of the dinar rose by another 14.1 per cent to the German mark and 4.1 per cent to the Japanese

yen. Thus, the dinar had gained 25.8 per cent against the DM and 18.5 per cent against the JY in the last 23 months.

As far as the dollar is concerned, the dinar maintained its exchange rate despite the sharp rise of the dollar against almost all major currencies. This does not mean that the dinar has not actually overtaken the dollar. The interest rate on the dinar was five percentage points above the interest rate on the dollar, with the result that the depositor in dinars in the last two years is 10 per cent better off than the depositor in dollars for an equivalent amount.

Those who did not trust the dinar because they acted on groundless devaluation rumours rather than on facts and information lost around one fifth of their savings during a two-year period. This is a just and fair penalty, well deserved by some depositors who miscalculated and used bad judgement.

So much for the past two years; but what about the coming two years? Is there any assurance that no devaluation of the dinar would take place? Should one cut his losses and switch back to the dinar or stick with a foreign currency? In other words, is the Central Bank and the Jordanian economy in a position to maintain the strength

of the dinar? It would be less convincing to answer simply yes or no. Instead, one should examine the trends of the monetary, fiscal and foreign trade performance and then make an informed judgement based on solid facts.

In the monetary field, we notice that the net official reserve of foreign exchange in the Central Bank of Jordan tripled to reach around \$1.4 billion. In the fiscal field, the budget is posting a cash surplus used to reduce domestic public debt which represents accumulated deficit of the previous years.

In the field of foreign trade, a rise in national exports, accompanied by a drop in foreign imports, can be observed, which narrows trade deficit. The current account of the balance of payments shows a constant reduction in deficit and is getting closer and closer to the target of self-sufficiency.

All economic indicators are giving positive readings. Monetary, fiscal and trade indicators are healthy. These are facts based on figures and actual performance. They are not wishful thinking. It is surprising, therefore, that the draft of the so-called "programme for national salvation" has asked for an altering of the current economic policies which led to these excellent results.

U.S. 'wait and see' pose could spell disaster for the Mideast

By Flora Lewis

PARIS — At least Secretary of State Madeleine Albright didn't pretend she saw some glimmer of promise for peace in the current Middle East situation. "If I can make a difference, I will be there," she said.

"If there is not enough happening for me to make a difference," she said, she would turn her efforts and time to other urgent issues.

It is honest as far as it goes. But it is not enough. Things do not stand still in that distressed region. They deteriorate if there is no push for a solution, and it is clear that none of the parties involved is now able or willing to push in the right direction.

That means the push has to come from outside, which can only mean the United States. The United States cannot just stand aside and wait for the lowering storm to pass, or it will

have to deal with worse trouble than Mrs. Albright encountered.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel is right about one thing. The Oslo formula has run its course, and it hasn't worked. It was based on the supposition that taking one conciliatory step at a time over a period of five years would gradually build enough confidence between Israelis and Palestinians to allow them to tackle a definitive settlement.

There is less confidence now than at the start. Former Prime Minister Shimon Peres, clearly heart-sick at the loss of hope but trying to restrain his criticism of Israel's government from abroad, in Paris this week spoke of what he considered Mr. Netanyahu's major error.

"He is trying to make Arafat an agent" of Israel, he said. "You can't give him orders." This refers to the

specific list of measures to repress terrorists that the Israeli government demands from the Palestinian National Authority as the condition for moving on with negotiations, with no quid pro quo except "then we'll talk."

Meanwhile, Mr. Netanyahu is moving step by step to confirm Palestinian suspicions that the talks will not bring them the state they seek. New settlements, house demolitions, economic sanctions including the withholding of tax money that belongs to the Palestinians but was collected by Israelis — all this reinforces the view that Israel is determined to dominate indefinitely, that no compromise can be expected.

The Israeli prime minister is concerned about his own fundamentalists and hard right wing, on whose support his government relies. Israeli society has never

been so deeply and bitterly divided, but he ignores the major opposition. He seems confident that he can count on the United States no matter what, so long as he can put the blame on Yasser Arafat. Washington may blink, mutter disapproval of some measures as Mrs. Albright did, but he responds with polemics.

So it is time for Washington to show where it expects the "peace process" to lead. The definitive negotiations were formally opened on schedule last year, and then forgotten. Mr. Netanyahu has proposed moving on with them. Fine, but what Yitzhak Rabin and Mr. Peres well knew but considered impolitic to admit should now be said openly: The talks will be about the terms and conditions for the Palestinian state, but they will bring a state.

Washington should now announce what it also

knows but finds hard to say for its own political reasons. It will recognise the Palestinian state as soon as acceptable terms are defined. That will help Mr. Arafat regain the leadership authority he needs to oppose terrorism.

It will help Egypt's Hosni Mubarak and King Hussein to argue for peace.

It will bring a rage of protest, from Mr. Netanyahu and his constituency and from part of the American Jewish community. That has to be faced. American Jews are also divided, a small minority dedicated to peace as fast as possible; another minority — very well organised, vocal and skilled in the uses of political contributions — against any risks or concessions for peace, and an uneasy, uncertain majority, as in Israel.

The political act has to be in finding the way to give voice and heart to that

majority. It would take a real act of courage from President Bill Clinton, and it would be a real act of statesmanship. It would show Mr. Netanyahu that he must please more than his right wing, that he does not have endless time at his disposal to create new faits accomplis.

Otherwise, there is no chance of breaking the impasse without a new, much greater shock. Given the forces involved and the complex relations, it is not likely to be another conventional war, though that cannot be ruled out in such a neighbourhood. It is likely to be distressingly violent.

For Washington to make a difference, it too must take a risk. It is far smaller than the risk of "just wait and see if something turns up." That is the policy of Charles Dickens's Mr. Micawber. It never got him anywhere.

International Herald Tribune

Cartoonists find being funny can be deadly serious

Cartoons can be powerful images, with the ability to evoke laughter, anger or sadness. But they can also ridicule and enrage politicians — and put their creators at risks

By Sharon Gerein

CANTERBURY, England — For his cartoon suggesting that President Robert Mugabe might be the next leader to follow Mobutu Sese Seko into exile, Tony Namate has been attacked as "treasonable, infuriating and unacceptable" and threatened with legal action by the Zimbabwe government.

Namate is not alone. Every year, cartoonists around the world are murdered, assaulted, jailed, fired and banned. When it comes to cartoons, governments often fail to see the joke.

Last year, Croatia made it a criminal offence to satirise public officials. Egypt has similar legislation. Cambodian newspapers have been instructed not to use cartoon animal figures to depict members of the government. In Singapore, the prime minister has threatened cartoonists.

Khalil Abu Arafah is in a double-bind: he faces censorship from two governments. He says the Israeli censors refuse permission for cartoons about Israeli soldiers, settlers, fanatic Jews or anything that might be construed as incitement against Israel; and the Palestinian National Authority will not allow him to draw Yasser Arafat or any member of the authority. "They consider these drawings an insult."

The late Greek journalist Helen Vlachos once said that a good test for a healthy democracy is the presence of a large number of cartoonists.

But even within a healthy democracy cartoons can sometimes prove too powerful or be taken too seriously. In 1992, a Japanese

politician committed suicide after a cartoon poked fun at the Kaze (wind) political party. The cartoonist simply omitted one stroke from the character for Kaze and the image took on a new meaning — shirami, meaning lice. The politician for the Kaze party was outraged and went to the magazine's

because "sometimes we can make things worse for the cartoonists."

Rob Edwards, director of the Centre for the Study of Cartoons and Caricature at the University of Kent in Canterbury, England, believes that trouble is built into the cartoonist's job.

"In dictatorial regimes and totalitarian societies, cartoonists are seen as the opposition," he says. "And if they aren't the opposition, then the cartoonist isn't doing his job."

One famous critic was German fascist dictator Adolf Hitler, who put British cartoonist David

the popular American cartoons. The Simpsons and Beavis and Butthead, as examples.

"They really take the mickey out of middle America," he points out. "But deep down most cartoonists are trying to be serious."

Nevertheless, he believes the role of the cartoon is changing: "Cartoons have to compete with the visual pollution of ads, blaring headlines, and colour. A cartoon can get lost in the clutter."

"And now with the Internet and animated video, cartoons are going to have to move along with

No laughing matter

Acts against cartoonists

- **Lamari Chawki** of Algeria's *La Tribune* jailed
- **Sid Ali Maitouh** forced underground after attempts on his life in Algeria
- **Guerroui Ibrahim** of *El Moudjahid* in Algeria, kidnapped and murdered
- **Cristian (Nick) Dzwonik** of Argentina abducted and beaten
- **Tony Namate** of Zimbabwe threatened with legal action by the government
- **Hong Song-dam**, of South Korea imprisoned for seven years
- **Manouchehr Karimzadeh** of Iran sentenced to 10-years jail for Khomeini-as-a-footballer cartoon
- **Oleg Schwarzburg** of Israel arrested
- **Fredrag (Corax) Koraksic** of Serbia charged
- **Asaf Kocak** of Turkey killed, **Ertan Aydin** and **Ahmet Erkanli** jailed
- **Bahaa al Boukhari** of Palestine threatened

LETTERS

Blood-boiling pictures

To the Editor:

MOST EVERYONE must have seen the television pictures and photos carried by the Arabic daily Al Ra'i in its Sept. 22 issue, showing two Israeli troops squeezing the head of a Palestinian between them and two other Israeli soldiers hitting a Palestinian while he sat helplessly on the ground. How brave of the Israeli soldiers to overpower and beat up unarmed Palestinians!

Such atrocious treatment should make the blood of not only the Palestinians but the whole world boil. How should the world expect the Palestinians to react to such inhumane and humiliating treatment? Can the international community expect anything but resentment, bitterness and hatred against Israelis, which might well result in resorting to extreme acts by the Palestinians?

It is all very well for the Israeli soldiers to show their "bravery" when they are armed to the teeth. But I wonder how "brave" they can be without their expensive and effective weapons! Others will of course ponder the same question.

Had the Palestinians, or any Arab for that matter, treated unarmed Israeli civilians in the same manner, the American and the European media, as well as the respected honourable members of the U.S. Congress, would have raised hell against the Arabs — literally.

On the other hand, it is indeed shameful for the Arabs to keep quiet about such humiliating and Nazi-like treatment of their Palestinian brethren.

Pascal B. Karmy,
Amman.

We hold the trump

To the Editor:

I READ Samer Bagdeen's article "Righting a wrong kind of publicity" (Jordan Times, Sept. 25, 1997) and I agree with him totally.

Yes, Jordan has many faces and all of them can be used to benefit the country.

From personal experience, I can say that mingling with foreigners, showing them the hospitality for which we are famous, hosting them for a day or two perhaps and giving them a "taste" of our character can be a good thing for both and an enlightening experience for them.

It happened with us and two families of foreigners who rented a house next to ours. We became friendly and I cannot describe their experience when eating mansaf, throwing away the knife and the fork, or enjoying our delicious falafel.

We have a lot to offer, as a country, renowned for its historical and tourist places, and as a people, known for its kindness and hospitality.

It is up to us to use these assets and project a beautiful image of Jordan.

Rula Samain Naffa,
Amman.

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any issue they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld upon request but only under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing and abridging.

Gemini News Service

Features

How good is your child's school?

By Richard Tanner

MOST PARENTS want to know that their school is doing its best for their children. It is natural that they should talk among family, friends and neighbours, sharing experiences outside the school. If children are moving schools, transferring between junior and senior or migrating to a new district, parents may focus their enquiries beyond the school-gate gossip and pay a visit. So how, in the absence of a Good Schools Guide, can one find out how suitable the new school is or, more importantly for most parents, how good the existing school is.

I suggest there are six main areas to investigate: policy, building, staffing, assessment, parents and students. First, policy: the school should have documents clear enough for all to understand what it is trying to do — the main school aims and their delivery. Parents should try to get copies of these before visiting or at least allow time to peruse them before they tour the school.

Policies should include what is taught at each level and how it is taught and assessed — the delivery of the curriculum. They should make reference to the other five areas, explaining how buildings are used safely, how staff are managed, how work is assessed, how parents are involved and what is expected of students.

Parents should look, too, for statements about activities. What music, drama, art, sports, clubs, shows, competitions and events, outside visits and other extramural opportunities are offered, to whom and at what cost? Finally, it should be checked if the school has reports from any outside inspectors.

Armed with this background information, one should be ready to tour the school. While open days, parents' evenings and similar events show what a school can do, it is recommended to visit it on a "normal" working day to see what it actually does. The rooms should be checked for size and the classes for the number of students. One should see how the desks are arranged, how the teachers interact with the students (and the visiting parent), and how didactic the teaching is.

The resources should be checked. Is there a library with plenty of newish books and magazines? If so, how is it used? Is there science and computers equipment and someone to look after it? Are there dictionaries and class libraries, globes and atlases, advanced materials for enrichment in each classroom or easily available from resource areas?

What facilities are available for arts and sports, and how are they used? Are the rooms and corridors alive with displays of children's work? Are they clean and tidy, especially the bathrooms? Are there spaces outside for children to play, quiet areas for chats and study, and are they supervised? As parents go around, they should note down questions they want to ask the headteacher.

Staffing: now the parents have reached his/her office, the headteacher should offer a list of the qualifications and experience of the school staff. It should be checked whether the staff are qualified in the areas they teach, trained and retrained to stay up-to-date in their work. One should want to ask about staff turnover — you want some but not too much. An average stay of the four to seven years is about right.

Parents should check if any moved from promotion: a school with a sound staff development policy is likely to benefit the child, as the teachers will be "on the ball."

Ask about staff absences (the fewer the better) and about class size, which can be compared with what was already seen. Trying to be around at breaks or at the end of the school day is good; if all the staff leave as the final bell goes, that is bad news.

Assessment: parents should ask how the students are assessed, whether mostly by tests and exams or if coursework counts, preferably samples gathered into a portfolio. Ask if contributions, both inside the classroom and out, count, and judge if the tenor is positive.

Ask about the reporting system: how frequently are reports sent home, are they meaningful to individual students and to the parents; do they praise good work and identify areas of concern; are the parents or students expected to contribute to them?

If one is not satisfied with what one hears, it should be asked how the school measures the progress of a single child in language or mathematics over several years. If the child is already in the school, parents can cross-check: does the child bring work home, is it marked regularly with positive comments and suggestions for improvement?

Ask to see examination results and if possible, compare these with national (or international) averages. It is less important to know that little Ahmad is 14th out of 33 in his Arabic class than that he can use the present tense, read simple sentences, has a vocabulary of some 500 words and that is just above normal for his age. Such objective assessment of each individual child is what the good school is aiming for.

Parents: They will have chatted to many in their neighbourhood and at the school gates to form an impression about how the school views them.

Arranging parents' visit will have revealed how welcoming the school is to parents. Now they will want to know how the school uses them.

Parents are one of the school's major resources. They know and respect their

children's worth and want the best for them. Parents come in pairs, with around five children each, so they can focus on your children much better than a teacher with 25-35 in a class.

Parents should ask if they are expected to help with and check homework, are contacted in cases of failure to learn or behave properly. They should find out if there is a parent support group raising funds, improving the resources, learning about curriculum changes and running social activities. If not, they should ask how they can help set one up.

Students: will have been seen in classrooms and corridors, in play areas at break time, so parents will have formed opinions about class size, behaviour and supervision. Parents may have chatted with students on their tour, asking them about their work and how they feel about it.

They should ask the headteacher about absence levels, homework policies, school uniform and costs, bullying, religious and sex education. Parents want their children to be happy and motivated, hard-working and enthusiastic, polite and considerate, ambitious and broad-thinking, so if they find the students in the school like that, they should hurry to sign up.

If not, they should ask what they can do to help the headteacher improve matters. The headteacher is one of the most significant persons in one's neighbourhood; she/he will need help to maintain or improve the school. And it should be remembered that if the local school is a good one, it will benefit not only the children but also the community.

The writer, an ex-principal of a British school, is now teaching at Amman Baccalaureate School. He contributed the above article to the Jordan Times.

Cooperation between EU, Arab countries helps achieve peace, prosperity for all

Following is an abbreviated version of a paper on "Security and Stability in the Mediterranean: An Arab View" prepared and presented by Dr. Mohammad Masalha, secretary general of the Lower House of Parliament and a political scientist professor at the University of Jordan, at the Halki International Seminar 1997, held on the Halki Island of Greece between Sept. 11 and 16. The annual Halki seminars are organised by the Hellenic Foundation for European Foreign Policy:

EARLY NEXT century, the European Union will, essentially, have to be concerned about two major neighbours: the Arabs and the Russians. It is therefore necessary that the EU set up its foreign policy agenda towards the mutual interests with these powers.

Conflicts and confrontations in the southeastern Mediterranean region, comprising the Arab World and Israel, have repercussions that are felt far beyond the shores of the Mediterranean.

Today, the region faces the danger of tensions and wars that threaten stability and seriously undermine efforts to promote international peace and security.

The situation in the Palestinian territories, south Lebanon and Cyprus underlines the urgent need for action to resolve these problems in accordance with international law.

Many Arab countries have emphasised that their security is closely interwoven with that of the European countries. Starting with the 1990s, more con-

crete steps were taken towards promoting European-Arab-Mediterranean dialogue at the levels of governments, parliaments, political parties and NGOs. Today, hundreds of meetings between the two sides are convened to explore ways of promoting cooperation in many areas, particularly peace, democracy and economic links.

The 1995 Barcelona Declaration stated in its preamble that "the two parties" joint initiative should be dedicated to the interests of peace, stability and development in their region...; the participants expressed their conviction that these are common targets which they pledged to promote and strengthen by all means at their disposal.

Highly appreciated in the Arab countries in general, the declaration identified means towards forging partnerships regarding:

1. Using peaceful means to settle their disputes.
2. Refraining from any direct or indirect intervention in the internal affairs of partners.
3. Renouncing any form of or recourse to the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity of a partner.
4. Strengthening cooperation in preventing and combating terrorism by ratifying and applying the international agreements they have signed.
5. Fighting against the expansion and diversification of organised crime.
6. Combating drug abuse and trafficking problems in all their aspects.

From an Arab standpoint, Jordan would stress that relations between the two sides should be guided and

governed by the cardinal principles of sovereignty, equality, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

To achieve these common, sacred goals of the Europe-Mediterranean partnership, Jordan's policies since 1989-1990 have been dedicated to achieving a swift democratic transition. The Kingdom's parliamentary course was resumed, with new laws guaranteeing pluralism, freedom of the press and free general elections that promoted the political participation of all citizens and enhanced the values of human rights and the status of women in the country.

As a member of Mediterranean group, Jordan presented its conceptions on the need for peace and security in the region based on the assumption that there should be genuine efforts to tackle the following regional problems: 1. The resurgence of ethnic, religious and nationalist violent movements in many Mediterranean countries.

2. The constantly widening economic and technological gap between the northern and southern Mediterranean shores, leading to extensive migration from southern to northern countries.

3. The presence of hot-spots in the region which give rise, in particular, to serious human rights violations.

4. The difficulties facing the Middle East peace process which permit the hardliners to wreck it.

Speaking to a visiting U.S. congressional delegation in Amman last August, His Majesty King Hussein stressed, that "the crisis that

emerged after the double suicide bombing should not to allow a minority from both sides to dictate its agenda and destroy the peace process."

Jordan believes that it is equally important that all states of the Mediterranean abide by international laws and the charter and resolutions of the U.N. if tensions in the region are to be eliminated and long-standing problems resolved in a way which is both just and viable.

All problems in the region should be resolved fairly, and all states on the Mediterranean shores must adhere to the fundamental principle that they are equal with regard to their independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Security and stability in this region are today threatened by wars of occupation, stalemate in the Arab-Israeli peace process, and the continuation of sanctions imposed on the Libyan and Iraqi peoples, which are a detriment to many countries in the region and to regional and Mediterranean cooperation in general.

As for the question of comprehensive security in the southeastern Mediterranean region, the European model is preferred. This model is based on avoiding future conflicts and disasters among neighbours who have a long shared history and geography and among peoples who have wasted much of their resources on arms build-up, at the expense of their development needs.

The 11th Interparliamentary Conference in Malta, of November 1995, called for the establishment of an

association of Mediterranean states, comprising the governmental and parliamentary branches, to advance and achieve a Mediterranean cooperation project — a vital factor to complement and reinforce the European Union process.

The southern countries of the Mediterranean region emphasise that regional security and stability remain the prerequisites for sustainable development and for a balanced partnership between the two sides of the basin.

There should be sincere efforts from the European side to help push forward the peace process between Israel and Syria and Lebanon, to help achieve a comprehensive peace based on Israeli withdrawal from Syrian and Lebanese territories.

This step would help bring about a just and lasting peace in the Middle East, which is essential for security and stability in the region.

The trend towards regionalism is becoming more effective, and the EU is called upon to achieve economic integration at the highest level in this region.

Cooperation towards peace and security requires that rich countries participate in the sustained development of the poor, southern countries.

There is also need to create a regional system of security which would facilitate mutual cooperation regarding the defence policies and crisis management of the Mediterranean countries. Finally, confidence-building measures can significantly increase security and stability in our region.

Excavations reveal artistic, engineering features of Petra entrance

By Brian Brown
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

PETRA, THE ruined Nabataean/Roman city that controlled the trade routes leading from the Far East to the Mediterranean, was a city of such wealth that it supported no fewer than 30,000 citizens at its height, the metropolis of the Roman province of Arabia.

To reach this extinct city visitors need first to go through the Siq, a natural rift in the sandstone hills surrounding it. It is a sandy little path that exhausts them before they even

reach the city; too narrow in places to allow three walking abreast.

Surely this is not the entrance to the desert oasis, the passage of caravans loaded with riches.

Petra National Trust (PNT) president, HRH Prince Ra'ad Bin Zeid, last week headed a group of officials on an inspection of the work being carried out to uncover and restore the original pavement of the Siq the way it looked to the visitor over 1,600 years ago. Work is being carried out by the PNT, in cooperation with the Department of

Antiquities, with funding by the Jordanian-Swiss Bilateral Committee.

The pavement, consisting of rectangular limestone, has been uncovered at the lower end of the Siq. Buried under a deposit of sandy erosion as deep as 3.5 m in places, it provided a suitable road for the incoming caravans.

Along the sides of the Siq two water channels were excavated, one for the every day use of water and one for drinking. The hydraulic system here revealed several ingenious features, including faucets for cleaning the street, fountains

chiselled out of the living rock and basins for removing silt from the water pipes.

Carvings and niches in the rock walls were also revealed; they were part of several sacred installations, previously known but not excavated, that possibly served as places to make dedications to the major local deity, Dushara.

Finally, a sculpted group consisting of both in the round and relief components depicting four camels and the guides of a caravan was uncovered. This testi-

fies to the business that kept Petra booming.

In addition to uncovering and restoring the Siq pavement, long-term project goals of the project include restoring the flanking hydraulic system, protecting the Siq from flash floods, restoring the surrounding Nabataean gardens and harvesting water for use in the Petra area.

The 12-month, JD 470,000 project began on July 22 and is being conducted in accordance with an agreement signed by the PNT and the Jordanian-Swiss Bilateral Committee.

It is executed by the PNT in coordination with the Department of Antiquities, the Petra Regional Council (PRC), and "Joint Venture," which groups Middle East Engineering Management, a Jordanian firm, and Intermonument, a Swiss restoration firm.

In addition to the archaeological expertise required, engineering skills are being employed to remove the amount of fill that has accumulated over the centuries. This has allowed the excavation of over 11,000 cubic metres of earth to date.

This is the most recent project the PNT has undertaken for the preservation and promotion of Petra, a registered UNESCO

World Heritage Site.

The PNT was established in 1989 as a non-governmental organisation to bring together interested parties, both local and foreign, to safeguard the fragile nature of Petra's unique heritage, increase the tourist appeal of the site and coordinate scholarly efforts to study the archaeology and history of this underdeveloped site.

Since its establishment, the PNT has been involved in projects such as the financial support of the excavation of prehistoric kilns near Wadi Mousa, study of the biodiversity of the region, an extensive study of the hydraulic systems flanking the Siq, and renovation of old Nazzal's Camp for visiting archaeologists.

Prince Ra'ad bin Zeid was accompanied on the tour of the site by PNT board members, Petra Regional Council (PRC) Director Kamel Mahadine and his assistant Suleiman

Farajat, Khairiyeh Amr from the Department of Antiquities, and Bilateral Committee members including Swiss Ambassador G.F. Pedotti and Ministry of Finance official Mahmoud Maher.

During a subsequent meeting with Dr. Mahadine, Prince Ra'ad said meeting the needs of Petra, an archaeological site, and the neighbouring urban centre of Wadi Mousa present difficulties, and a balance must be struck to satisfy the requirements of both.

Prince Ra'ad acknowledged the role that Dr. Mahadine and his team were playing in Petra, saying the new improvements were visible.

The situation presents challenges that will require change, he added, urging that the necessary steps be taken to meet them.

Dr. Mahadine praised the shared roles between the government and the PNT in the preservation of Petra.



The major group of figures revealed during the Siq excavations depicts the lower part of the body of a guide and the front paws of a camel he is leading (photo courtesy of PNT)

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Jordan, Iraq agree to expand trade

BAGHDAD (J.T.) — The Amman Chamber of Industry (ACI) and the Iraqi chambers of trade and industry have agreed on increasing the volume of goods exchanged between Iraq and Jordan and on paving the way for increased bilateral cooperation in industrial, commercial and investment fields.

The announcement was made Saturday at the end of talks with Iraqi officials and the conclusion of a visit to Iraq by a delegation representing the ACI, led by President Khalidoun Abu Hassan.

According to the announcement released Saturday, "exchanges of visits by Iraqi and Jordanian businessmen have contributed towards boosting economic and trade relations between the two sides."

The announcement noted that the two sides underlined the need for coordinating Jordanian and Iraqi stands at conferences organised by Arab countries and those at the international level and emphasised the need for cooperation between the two countries to meet the challenges from major world economic blocs and to meet the requirements of the World Trade Organisation and the ISO-9000 standards.

The statement said that Jordanian and Iraqi businessmen and officials reviewed scopes of cooperation in investment projects, and that the Jordanians urged the Iraqi merchants to import their goods via the Port of Aqaba and through the Kingdom's free trade zones.

The announcement

voiced Jordan's appreciation of Iraq's decision to import from Jordan part of its food and medicine under the U.N.-Iraq food-for-oil deal and stressed that the Jordanian side will continue to supply the required high-quality food and medicine at competitive prices.

Earlier this month, Iraq announced that it has concluded contracts with 35 Jordanian industrial institutions to purchase goods worth more than \$83 million within the framework of the U.N.-Iraq food-for-oil deal which allows Baghdad to sell up to \$2 billion million worth of oil every six months to buy food and medicine.

The announcement, which followed the talks in Baghdad between Sept. 23-26 did not give specific figures about the

amounts of food and medicine which Jordan intends to sell to Iraq.

According to a trade protocol concluded in Baghdad last January, Jordan will export to Iraq \$225 million worth of products in 1997 in exchange for oil imports. The amount is more than the \$200 million in 1996.

The recently concluded \$83 million contracts do not fall within the framework of the trade protocol but rather under the U.N.-Iraq food-for-oil deal.

The Jordanian delegation met with the Iraqi ministers of industry, mineral, health, trade, finance, transport, oil and agriculture, and held talks with Iraqi businessmen and merchants to discuss trade and investment projects.

UNCTAD: Aid needed for countries lagging in development

DHAKA (AFP) — The international community needs to take urgent action to help the world's least developed countries (LDCs) catch up on lagging economic and social development, a U.N. agency has said.

And it warned in its report launched for the first time outside Geneva that more than a third of all such least developed countries had descended into civil chaos since 1980.

"Urgent action by the international community to help least developed countries tackle the widespread problems of economic and social regress, state failure and internal conflicts in LDCs should be a priority," the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) said in its 1997 annual report on LDCs.

A significant number of least developed countries had lagged seriously behind in development over the past decade, the U.N. agency said.

"The potential human and economic costs of regress are enormous, and are not confined to the regressed economies themselves," it said.

What was needed was the "investment of substantial resources by the international community to strengthen institutions and state structures in LDCs, support peace-keeping, provide humanitarian assistance and rebuild war-torn economies," the report said.

"Their economies have declined, social conditions have worsened markedly, and they have become increasingly marginalised from the mainstream of the world economy," UNCTAD

indicated.

"In the worst cases of regress, the entire state apparatus has disintegrated amid civil strife," it said, such as in Burundi, Rwanda and Congo in the Great Lakes region of Africa.

"Over one-third of the countries in the LDC group have experienced some form of violent civil strife since 1980, with high — predominantly civilian — mortality, the displacement of large numbers of people from their homes and livelihoods, and the destruction of infrastructure and productive assets," the report added.

The report stressed the international community could neither afford to ignore such problems nor could it delay effective action.

"The experience of several LDCs, such as Uganda, has demonstrated that peace can be restored and that economies and state structures can be rebuilt even after prolonged and devastating civil war," it said.

The international community had a role to play in providing support for building and strengthening institutions, UNCTAD Secretary General Rubens Ricupero said launching the report.

"Where institutional deterioration is not too advanced, external assistance can help to prevent state collapse in LDCs," the UNCTAD said.

In countries torn by internal conflicts, the regional and international community could play a "vital role in brokering peace and supporting the reconstruction of social and economic structures necessary for development."

Iraq may set up duty-free zone

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq may create a duty-free zone in the southern province of Basra, the official INA news agency quoted a senior customs official as saying. The duty-free zone, the country's first, would be based in Khor Azzubair on the Gulf, INA said. "The general customs body and the ports office have begun feasibility studies," Hamid Shukr Mahmud, the director general of Iraqi customs, said, according to INA. Iraq wants to make the zone a centre for foreign trade, INA said.

World Bank: China stands to gain billions from WTO membership

HONG KONG (AFP) — China's entry to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) is "imperative" for its own welfare and that of the rest of the globe, the World Bank has said.

Bank officials, launching a long-term study of China's prospects, said membership of the global trade body would reap billions of dollars in extra trade for the country and even more for the rest of the world.

But negotiations on its accession, which have dragged on for years, appear to be making the hurdles ever higher, said a senior official at the launch of the report "China 2020: Development Challenges in the New Century."

"After watching negotiations there is a tendency to think that these rules are fairly tough," said Nicholas Hope, the bank's former director for China and Mongolia.

There was a perception that "the barrier seems to change — once you clear the hurdle, they seem to raise it to a new height," he said, adding that this was probably to be expected since "every country wants the best possible deal when China enters the WTO."

believed it was better to have China inside the WTO than outside. Mr. Hope told a news conference.

"As long as China is outside anything can happen — trade wars could break out on a bilateral or regional basis ... there will need to be fine tuning but some of that can be done afterwards," he said.

Yukon Huang, World Bank director for China, said the setting of barriers for membership were a matter for the negotiations.

But he stressed that providing greater access to the finance sector in China and allowing its enterprises to import and export with fewer restrictions were issues "China needs to address quite seriously."

The World Bank report said China stood to gain \$116 billion a year in total trade by 2005 if its offered tariff cuts to join the WTO were implemented and industrial countries in turn abolished quotas under the Multi-Fibre Arrangement, which seeks to liberalise trade in textiles.

The benefits to the rest of the world could be "twice as great" as those reaped by China, the report said.

"Provided markets remain open, China's rapid integration with the world economy will have differing, but mostly favourable, effects on the world," the World Bank said.

Industrialised countries would benefit from China's rising demand for capital- and knowledge-intensive manufactured goods and significant gains in terms of trade.

Only labour-intensive industries would face a squeeze, the report said, adding that much of that structural change had already occurred.

Among developing nations, the effects would depend on how much they traded directly with China and how much they competed with it in third markets.

"Countries that trade heavily with China, such as Korea, will gain significantly," the World Bank said.

"Low- and middle-income countries that are close competitors with China, such as India and Indonesia, will experience some terms-of-trade losses, but their total trade will keep growing and perhaps their world market share of labour-intensive manufactures as well," the world body concluded.

Kuwait had budget surplus in 1996/97

KUWAIT (R) — Kuwait recorded a budget surplus in the fiscal year which ended in June compared with a projected net deficit of 1.21 billion dinars (\$3.99 billion), the central bank governor was quoted as saying. Sheikh Salem Abdul Aziz Al Sabah told the official Kuwait News Agency that early budget estimates showed the OPEC member recording a surplus in the 4.21 billion dinar 1996/97 budget — the first since Kuwait was freed from a seven-month Iraqi occupation in 1991.

He did not disclose the size of the surplus, which was achieved mainly due to a rise in world oil prices during the last fiscal year. Kuwait calculates oil revenue at a conservative \$13 a barrel for an output of about two million barrels per day.

Kuwaiti crudes were traded at an average \$19.42 a barrel in the first quarter of 1997 and \$17.29 in the second quarter, according to calculations by the National Bank of Kuwait.

OPEC said earlier this month that members' oil export revenue jumped by \$28.6 billion in 1996 to \$161 billion due to higher oil prices.

THE Daily Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Reserve
- 5 One line
- 9 Light wood
- 14 Wifely partner
- 15 — home!
- 16 Historian Durant
- 17 Harvest
- 18 Blackhorn
- 19 Alarm
- 20 Spasmodically
- 23 No longer working: abbr.
- 24 Gymnast's goal
- 25 Necessitate
- 29 Mature
- 31 Oklahoma city
- 35 Something to rule?
- 36 Israeli statesman
- 37 Vexation
- 38 Immediately
- 42 Plumber's joint
- 43 Concerning
- 44 Gentry
- 45 Touts tout them
- 47 Zoo doc
- 48 Deer feature
- 49 Author Levin
- 52 Rarely
- 61 Lowly workers
- 62 "Oz" man
- 63 Shelter on a slope
- 64 Group of three
- 65 Sommer, of film
- 66 Campus mil. gp.
- 67 Detection device
- 68 Youth
- 69 — majesty

by Philip J. Anderson

ROSA SADIE SODA
UPUP ARENA EVEN
TERR FOCUS SALK
SNEEZES REGALIA
SITE EDAM
CRISPY JIFFY ALI
HUNKY JIFFY ALI
OMNI SONOFF SPIT
ROE STYNE STEVE
ERRATA LEADER
RUMS BEAR
ORLANDO EARSHOT
PEARL OTHER HIDE
USNA OTURN LIVES
STET TONY'S PEAT

DOWN

- 1 Stinging remark
- 2 Head
- 3 Norwegian saint
- 4 Military cap
- 5 Ship
- 6 Conspicuous success
- 7 Sacred symbol
- 8 Requite
- 9 Mistaken
- 10 Esoteric
- 11 Dissembler
- 12 Contents of tankards
- 21 Banal
- 22 Office worker, for short
- 25 Poetry Muse
- 26 Well-known
- 27 Lugged
- 28 Bat wood
- 29 Yarn, in a way
- 32 Nothing
- 33 Seething
- 34 Dissuade
- 36 Sea eagle
- 39 Couch
- 40 Duel
- 41 Super-model
- 46 Kind of clay
- 48 Insight
- 50 Part of a stair
- 51 Windfall
- 52 Chooses
- 53 Pianist Peter
- 54 Invent
- 55 Help with a twist
- 56 Cotton quantity
- 57 Clayey deposit
- 58 Reed
- 59 Scraps
- 60 Pleasant

Peanuts

Days turned into weeks... weeks into months.

We never heard anything more from Andy and Olaf.

I imagine they're still out there, somewhere, walking and walking, trying to find their brother Spike in the desert.

IT SAYS, "TO CROSS STREET, PUSH BUTTON."

IT'S PROBABLY SOME KIND OF TRICK.

Andy Capp

HERE YOU ARE, FLO.

THANKS, MUM. NO WONDER I'M ALWAYS BROKE. THE WAY THAT BROKE GOES ON.

YOU'RE RIGHT, FLO. YOU'D THINK THAT EVEN HE WOULD OCCASIONALLY STOP AND WONDER WHERE THE MONEY COMES FROM.

LOOK, MISSUS, I MAY HAVE MY FAULTS, BUT NOBODY CAN ACCUSE ME OF BEING NOSY!!

Mutt'n'Jeff

SCREEEE

WORTH ANIMAL CROSSING AND

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 1997

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES:

(March 21 to April 19) Be a little cautious today, especially if money's involved. A gamble may pay off better for the other person than it does for you. Make inquiries of a distant friend this afternoon. You'll learn more in five minutes of conversation than you would in a year of research.

TAURUS:

(April 20 to May 20) You're only halfway there, but it's a great improvement. A partner who loves you is sending you energy. The job that once seemed daunting is starting to look doable. If the two of you make a choice, the others will fall in line. It's just a matter of regaining control.

GEMINI:

(May 21 to June 21) You're still strong, but now you have to deal with reality. There's work to be done, and it's Friday! Better get into high gear, and quickly. A co-worker may offer to cover for you, but beware. That service could cost you more than you can afford.

MOON CHILDREN:

(June 22 to July 21) This is much better. The conflict you've just been through has taught you a lot. You're still assimilating some of the lessons. Relax in the arms of a loved one tonight and count your accomplishments. Making it through that latest predicament is one of them.

LEO:

(July 22 to August 21) Take care of a mess at home this afternoon so you can go out later tonight. Your friends are in a partying frame of mind. All sorts of unexpected things might happen, too. That's OK. You're up for an adventure. Address a roommate's concerns first, or there'll be trouble.

VIRGO:

(August 22 to September 22) The worst is really past by now. You've learned a valuable lesson, hopefully not the hard way. Relax and let it soak in. You'll get badly needed support from a loved one. This not only helps you understand, but also replenishes your enthusiasm. Let it in.

LIBRA:

(September 23 to October 22) Conditions have changed, but you're still in control of most things in your life. Take care of your money could get away from you. Don't let a loved one talk you into buying something you don't need. Compromise, and get something useful for the house instead.

SCORPIO:

(October 23 to November 21) This is more like it! A wave of good feelings comes over you this morning. Love and be loved. This afternoon could be irritating, however. Something at home won't work. Instead of worrying about it, go buy a new one. You'll find the money you need in a surprising way.

SAGITTARIUS:

(November 22 to December 21) Did you forget to do something you promised — something that's due this afternoon? Better check through that stack of papers on your desk, just to make sure. If your new skills aren't enough to handle a difficult task, bring in an expert. That's not cheating.

CAPRICORN:

(December 22 to January 20) You're luckier today, but there are still things to watch out for. Confer with a friend about your next course of action. Things are moving pretty quickly, but you have enough time for this meeting. Make sure it's in private. Today, the walls have ears.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Your fortunes seem to have taken a turn for the worse. Actually, it's just that you don't have as much control as you'd like. This won't stop you, but it could slow you down. That's OK. Think about the practical consequences of your impending behaviour before you act.

PISCES:

(February 20 to March 20) You're much more confident today. A loved one lends support, and you're learning fast. Venture further than before. It doesn't matter if you don't know it all. Your faith and love will guide you. Also, listen to an older person's slightly confrontational advice tonight.

THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen

GLASBERGEN

"My mom said if I was a good boy, I could get a baby brother. I've been good for 40 years and I'm still waiting."

JUMBLE. THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

NEPOR

DYNAS

LETOU

YIPTTS

Answer here: _____

Yesterday's Jumble: LIBEL NIPPY OBLONG FRIEZE
Answer: Where the company downsizing put the manager — ON THE "FIRING" LINE

WHAT THEY DID WHEN THE WINE RAN LOW AT THE FESTIVAL

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

(Answers tomorrow)

Ministry of Trade on Zargha-Ah

Ministry of Trade officials have said that the Zargha-Ah project, which is being developed by a consortium of Jordanian and Iraqi companies, is progressing well. The project, which is located in the Zargha-Ah area, is expected to be completed by the end of the year. The Ministry of Trade has said that the project is a major step towards increasing trade between Jordan and Iraq, and that it is a testament to the strong relationship between the two countries.

REUTERS The Business

Major Currencies & Cross Rates			
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP
US Dollar	1.7598	0.6223	0.7560
DM Mark	0.5682	1.0000	0.6366
SE Mark	1.6055	2.8320	0.4271
CHF Franc	0.6878	1.2095	0.4271
FF Franc	0.0082	1.4508	0.5131
SD Dollar	0.7223	1.2772	0.4446
Yen	0.0008	1.0231	0.3811
US Dollar	0.5048	88.78	0.3141
SD Dollar	0.1692	0.2976	0.1055

Energy			
Oil	Last	Previous	Change
Brent	19.72	19.41	0.31
WTI	20.84	20.35	0.49
Oil	19.72	19.41	0.31
Oil	18.25	18.15	0.10
Oil	191.00	195.00	4.00

JOD Cross Rates			
Currency	Buy	Sell	Change
US Dollar	0.739	0.710	0.029
GB Sterling	1.1362	1.1419	0.0057
DE Mark	0.4318	0.4038	0.0280
CH Franc	0.4855	0.4889	0.0034
FR Franc	0.1193	0.1204	0.0111
JP Yen	0.5235	0.5864	0.0629
NL Guilder	0.3559	0.3587	0.0028
IL Lira	0.4111	0.4138	0.0027

Bourse Main Equ			
	Index	Value	Change
New York	DOW JONES	752	1.41
New York	S&P 500	948	0.12
London	FT-SE 100	525	0.12
Tokyo	NIKKEI 225	1785	0.12
Paris	CAC 40	280	0.12
Frankfurt	DAX	280	0.12

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Daily Business Deal

A review of news from the Arabic press

Ministry of Transport completes study on Zarqa-Amman-Sweileh railway

**** ACCORDING TO Bassam Saket,** the Ministry of Transport has formulated plans to raise the level of public transport services through restructuring. The plans aim to create a modern system to transport passengers within and between various cities, he said.

The transport minister announced that the ministry has completed a technical and economic feasibility study to build a modern passenger railway between Zarqa-Amman-Sweileh to serve the densely populated areas on this line. The railway will serve as the first nucleus for a modern public transport network as the study has shown the "good viability" of this project despite the low financial return, Dr. Saket indicated noting that the low return characterises public transport projects all over the world.

The minister said a new perception is needed to achieve a suitable method to implement the railway project without putting additional financial burdens on the treasury. He added that the ministry was contacted by many parties and international companies which expressed interest to carry out the project. The implementation would be in the form of an investment by foreign and local private sectors in

addition to carrying out parallel commercial projects to cover an expected financial gap. A major part of the cost will be secured from foreign grants and soft loans.

The transport minister said the intention is to attract an international consultancy company to help the ministry throughout all the stages of the project to provide the technical, financial, economic and legal expertise up to the signing of the agreement with the investors. The project was divided into the following three stages:

1. The new Zarqa-Zarqa-Raghdan car depot for a total 25.9 kilometres.
2. Raghdan car depot-Amman Hall for a total 2.5 kilometres.
3. Raghdan car depot - Sweileh for a total 13.3 kilometres.

The railway will follow the old Hijaz railway route with some changes. It will pass through the Zarqa station and Russeifa up to Amman station and then to Raghdan car depot. From there, the railway will branch into two sections: one will reach the Amman Hall at the Ras Al 'Ain area, and the second will cross downtown and stretch to the Abdali car depot, University of Jordan and then end at Sweileh (Al Dustour).

Koreans describe Jordan's investment environment as 'open and attractive'

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Korean businessmen representing 10 small and medium-sized industries yesterday described as promising and satisfactory their first day of bilateral contacts with Jordanian counterparts.

The Korean business delegation, which arrived here Friday on the second leg of a Mideast tour which includes Saudi Arabia and Egypt, will focus on strengthening trade ties between the two countries, but it will also explore investment and joint-venture opportunities, delegation members said.

According to Seok-Goon Moon, member of the Kyonggi Provincial Council and head of the delegation, the geographical similarities between Jordan and Korea provide fertile ground for boosting bilateral economic cooperation.

Both countries are small in size and enjoy political stability though they are located in troubled areas, Mr. Moon pointed out, adding that Korean businessmen are "attracted by the Kingdom's favourable investment climate."

Delegation members praised Jordan's investment legislation and described the investment environment here as "open and attractive."

"The main purpose of our mission here is to promote bilateral trade, and increase cooperation between the two countries, but we are also exploring investment possibilities," Mr. Moon said, adding that Korean investors are interested in encouraging local production of goods that Korea could re-import.

Highlighting the mutual benefits that could result from increased cooperation, the director of the International Cooperation Office of the Kyonggi Province, Hyung-Koo Lee noted that "Korea can provide know-how and Jordan qualified human resources."

"If Jordan can produce locally, it can boost its exports, and therefore expand its economy," Mr. Lee added, pointing out that his country already re-exports Korean products manufactured somewhere else.

The three-day Korean mission, that is scheduled to head for Cairo on Monday, was organized by the Korea Trade Centre and includes businessmen and council members from the province of Kyonggi, an economic and industrial centre surrounding the South Korean capital, Seoul.



The Korean business delegation visiting Jordan

The visiting businessmen represent industries operating in various sectors, ranging from stationery and automotive parts to industrial diamond tools, water dispensers and automobile accessories.

To many of them, "Jordan is a very important location to penetrate neighbouring countries, such as Iraq, Syria and Israel," emphasised the coordinator of the Korea

Trade Centre in Kyonggi, Sae-Kwang Kim, assistant manager at Kong Hwa Co. Ltd, a specialised producer of automotive parts that supplies leading brands like Daewoo, Daihatsu, Hyundai and Kia, said he was considering an application for exclusive dealership forwarded by one Jordanian firm.

"We are very much interested," Mr. Kim said, adding that "responses from both sides seem very positive."

Yousef Ali from Saif Electronic and Trading Est., a dealer in security systems, telephone exchanges and satellite receivers, who has been dealing with Korean firms for some years, said Korean products have great potential on the Jordanian market because of their good quality-cost rapport.

Korean products quality is improving fast, while prices are very competitive when compared to similar items from other Asian countries, Mr. Ali said.

REUTERS

REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	MLG	FRF
US Dollar	-	1.7598	0.6229	1.4540	121.25	1.3845	1718.11	1.9811	5.9103
DE Mark	0.5682	-	0.3536	0.8262	68.89	0.7865	978.60	1.1258	3.3586
GB Sterling	1.6055	2.8320	-	2.3384	194.28	2.2228	2760.03	3.1807	9.4890
CH Franc	0.6878	1.2085	0.4278	-	83.35	0.9515	1181.52	138.36	4.0621
JP Yen	0.0082	1.4508	0.5132	1.1987	-	1.1414	14.17	163.32	4.8725
CA Dollar	0.7223	1.2772	0.4468	1.0539	1.14	-	1247.54	1.4380	4.2890
IT Lira	0.0008	1.0231	0.3819	0.0845	1420.05	0.8049	-	11.52	3.4360
NL Guilder	0.0048	88.78	0.3140	73.39	61.15	0.6985	867.32	-	2.9818
FR Franc	0.1692	0.2976	0.1053	24.5886	20.49	0.2341	33.50	33.5000	-

Middle Eastern Currencies									
Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	LEB	EGP
US Dollar	-	0.7085	3.7504	0.3770	3.6398	0.3036	3.6728	1537.00	3.3880
Jordan Dinar	1.4114	-	5.2934	0.5321	5.1373	0.4285	5.1839	2169.37	4.7960
Saudi Riyal	0.2688	0.1889	-	0.1005	0.97	0.0810	0.98	409.82	0.9060
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	1.8794	9.9483	-	9.65	0.8053	9.74	4077.03	9.0135
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1947	1.0304	1.0304	-	0.0834	1.01	422.28	0.9338
Kuwait Dinar	3.2938	2.3337	12.3531	1.2417	11.99	-	12.10	5062.58	0.9338
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1929	1.0211	1.0208	0.9910	0.0827	-	418.48	0.9252
Lebanese/1000	0.85	0.4610	2.4401	0.2453	2.3681	0.1975	2.3896	-	2.2108
Egyptian	0.2943	0.2085	1.1037	0.1109	1.0712	0.0893	1.0809	452.32	-

Energy			
Oils	Last	Previous	
Brent	19.72	19.41	
W. Texas	20.84	20.35	
Bonny	19.72	19.41	
Dubai	18.25	18.15	
UL Gas	191.00	195.00	

Mid-East Currencies									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY				
SA Riyal	0.2688	0.4694	0.1661	0.388	32.344				
AE Dirham	0.2723	0.4793	0.1696	0.3961	33.026				
KW Dinar	3.2938	5.7971	2.0517	4.7916	399.52				
BH Dinar	0.3770	4.6885	1.6521	3.8595	321.75				
CY Pound	1.9132	3.3668	1.1909	2.7818	231.98				

JOD Cross Rates			
Currency	Buy	Sell	
US Dollar	0.708	0.710	
GB Sterling	1.1362	1.1419	
DE Mark	0.4018	0.4038	
CH Franc	0.4865	0.4889	
FR Franc	0.1198	0.1204	
JP Yen	0.5835	0.5864	
NL Guilder	0.3569	0.3587	
IT Lira	0.4117	0.4138	

Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)									
Period	1-3 Months	3-6 Months	6-9 Months	9-12 Months	1-3 Years	3-5 Years	5-7 Years	7-9 Years	10+ Years
USD	5.51	5.65	5.70	5.77	5.88				
GBP	7.01	7.16	7.26	7.19	7.43				
JPY	0.44	0.44	0.47	0.42	0.48				
DEM	3.16	3.06	3.25	3.38	3.50				
FRF	3.18	3.31	3.44	3.57	3.71				
CHF	1.30	1.25	1.53	1.58	1.78				
ITL	6.41	6.25	6.07	5.78	5.60				

Main Equity Indices									
Bourse	Index	Value	Chng	% Chng	High	Low	Pr Cts		
New York	DOW JONES	7922.18	74.17	0.95	7928.8	7848.8	7848		
New York	S&P 500	945.22	7.31	0.78	948.44	937.91	937.91		
London	FT-SE 100	5228.3	180.8	3.17	5244.3	5101.5	5085.5		
Tokyo	NIKKEI 225	17994.71	-347.25	-1.89	18354	17933	18342		
Paris	CAC 40	2985.63	-19.75	-0.66	3004.3	2972	3005.4		
Frankfurt	DAX	4080.78	-87.8	-1.83	4083.7	4088.5	4148.5		

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET										
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ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 27/09/1997										
PAST 12 MONTHS HIGH LOW		COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF TRANS.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE
N	346,000 241,500	ARAB BANK	15.6	1.18	24	1580	533530	335.00	338.50	3.50+
	2,340 1,680	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	6.3	0.00	49	245501	473976	1.92	1.93	0.01+
	3,600 2,760	BANK OF JORDAN	6.3	0.00	1	1000	2990	3.00	2.99	0.01-
	2,480 1,350	INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	9.2	0.00	9	2400	6065	2.33	2.33	-
	5,200 4,600	THE HOUSING BK.	14.8	3.92	2	550	2726	4.95	4.95	-
	4,180 2,440	JOR. KUWAIT BANK	11.2	0.00	1	100	315	3.14	3.15	0.01+
	1,050 740	JOR. GULF BANK	6.7	0.00	9	7900	6085	7.75	7.79	0.04+
	4,050 3,520	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	15.1	3.24	44	32650	121426	3.76	3.70	0.06-
	3,750 3,080	JOR. INV. FID. BANK	23.1	0.00	2	550	1972	3.62	3.59	0.03-
	2,200 890	BBIT AL-HAL (BETTER)	6	16.13	1	100	93	92	93	0.01+
BANK SECTOR TOTALS										
INDEX: 241.40		CHNG: +0.82	142	292531	1149177					
	2,200 1,590	JOR. FRENCH INSUR.	5.0	8.52	4	1550	2728	1.76	1.76	-
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS										
INDEX: 115.15		CHNG: 0.00	4	1550	2728					
I	1,930 1,550	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	9.7	5.00	207	199895	401890	1.93	2.00	0.07+
I	3,430 1,320	IRSID ELECTRICITY	21.4	3.19	2	194	698	3.43	3.60	0.17+
	1,550 930	NATL. PORTFOLIO	9	0.00	14	6300	8503	1.33	1.35	0.02+
	1,010 820	REAL ESTATE INV.	12.8	0.00	1	250	230	0.93	0.92	0.01-
	1,790 1,150	MID. EAST HOTELS	18.7	0.00	1	200	246	1.23	1.23	-
	3,720 2,890	ARAB INTL. TV. EDUC.	9.0	0.00	5	1025	3542	3.52	3.49	0.01-
	1,290 790	JOR. EDUCATION	9	0.00	7	2400	2385	1.00	0.99	0.01-
	2,230 1,630	UNITED CO.	8.4	6.25	5	2200	3872	1.76	1.76	-
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS										
INDEX: 111.06		CHNG: +0.15	243	212510	421715					
	4,450 3,220	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	25.6	2.89	7	846	3227	3.84	3.80	0.04-
	4,140 3,000	JOR. PHOSPHATE MINES	10.3	2.69	1	100	372	3.70	3.72	0.02+
	7,850 5,420	ARAB FODDER CO.	14.5	3.20	5	5900	36390	6.20	6.25	0.05+
	10,000 6,070	JOR. PETROL. REFINERY	10.6	3.10	16	1366	14998	10.90	10.97	0.07+
	3,260 1,620	INDUSTRIAL COMM. AG.	9	0.00	8	2350	3870	1.66	1.64	0.02-
	4,700 3,040	ARAB PAPER. MANF.	12.6	3.39	12	2833	12982	4.59	4.56	0.03-
	3,850 2,220	ARAB ALUM. IND.	5.8	10.04	1	800	1992	2.50	2.49	0.01-
	1,240 990	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	11.6	0.00	99	180150	100573	55	55	-
	1,770 910	ARAB PAPER CONV. IND.	29.0	0.00	6	1300	1244	1.00	0.99	0.05-
	1,200 810	NATIONAL IND.	9	0.00	68	71150	42287	57	57	-
	1,200 510	INTERMED. PETRO. CHEM.	9	0.00	49	37940	21371	55	56	0.01+
	920 530	JOR. ROCKWOLD IND.	9	0.00	6	2150	1409	65	66	0.01+
	890 530	JOR. SULPHUR-CEMENT	9	0.00	6	1000	1416	62	64	0.02+
	1,670 1,120	ARAB PAPER. CHEM.	17.0	0.00	6	1000	1330	1.33	1.33	-
	1,460 900	JOR. IND. RESOURCES	12.1	11.11	13	7150	6435	90	90	-
	1,620 1,300	NATL. CHLORIDE	14.9	4.43	3	10000	15800	1.58	1.58	-
	1,070 810	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	15.6	0.00	21	11550	9818	84	85	0.01+
	2,080 1,340	EL. & WAT. SUPPLY	53.1	0.00	5	235	355	1.55	1.51	0.04-
	1,330 1,080	INTL. TOBACCO	6.2	0.00	2	600	678	1.13	1.13	-
	1,200 860	UNION CH. & VEG.	50.0	0.00	8	4050	4455	1.10	1.10	-
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS										
INDEX: 122.65		CHNG: +0.19	366	364370	294841					
GRAND TOTAL										
INDEX: 176.13		CHNG: +0.54	755	870961	1868462					
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 27/09/1997										
	630 300	CENTRAL GEN. STORAGE	9	0.00	1	1000	310	31	31	-
	640 380	JOR. TRADE FAC.	11.2	0.00	28	47500	19767	41	42	0.01+
	1,550 1,060	ZARA FOR INVESTMENT	75.4	0.00	6	535900	616285	1.10	1.15	0.05+
	770 660	UNION INV. 50%	9	0.00	5	101924	24429	73	73	-
	360 570	JOR. IND. INVEST.	36	0.00	36	87878	34917	39	39	0.01+
N	38,000 29,000	JOR. TOURIST TRANS. CO	3.1	3.13	1	100	3197	30.45	31.97	1.52+
N	950 610	AL-DAMLIYAH 75%	71.0	0.00	7	70000	34300	73	74	0.01+
N	1,050 850	UNIZED FOR FIDAN. INV	49.5	0.00	5	50000	47500	1.00	0.95	0.05-
	2,000 1,200	JOR. IND. MARK. TRD	4.0	0.00	4	580	580	23	23	-
	710 490	ARAB FOOD & MED.	9	0.00	7	3200	1571	51	49	0.02-
	840 730	ARAB INTL. INV. TRD.	46.1	0.00	13	15750	6115	40	40	-
	750 510	JORDAN STEEL	6.4	6.56	11	5750	4370	76	76	-
	720 480	HIDESTAR PRAL 75%	6	0.00	6	8015	3015	63	63	-
	1,190 860	UNION TOBACCO 15%	9	0.00	1	80500	74060	1.16	1.17	0.01+
	730 550	RAZI FARM. 85%	9	0.00	4	4900	2566	66	66	-
	1,290 840	IND. TRD	10.0	0.00	1	286	286	31	30	0.01-
N	1,000 690	NAT. ALUMINIUM. 75%	98.8	0.00	6	15894	7150	71	71	-
	1,840 580	MID. EAST COMPLEX	7.5	16.39	19	68300	41588	62	61	0.01-
GRAND TOTAL										
					185	1128166	938306			

Women's Basketball Championship

Ahli seek to repeat win over Jazireh tonight

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Al Ahli seek to repeat their first round win and take second place in the Women's Basketball Championship which concludes Sept. 30.

Al Ahli had scored a 69-45 win over Al Jazireh in the first round and are expected to repeat that tonight with their opponent's lineup abandoned by almost all of its veteran players.

Adding to the fact that the absence of many players has taken its toll, Al Jazireh have evidently not prepared seriously for the competition resigning to the fact that they cannot win the title this year.

While Al Jazireh have failed to win a single match, Al Ahli beat Al Jazireh and lost to Al Orthodoxy 67-50 in the first round and again on Friday.

Al Orthodoxy secured the title Friday after beating Al Ahli 82-60 enabling them to maintain their unbeaten record with one match to go against Al Jazireh Tuesday.

Al Orthodoxy last won the title in 1994 with Al Jazireh first and Al Ahli second in the past two seasons.

Al Orthodoxy proved they were serious for the title after scoring an 89-36 win over Al Jazireh in the first round in a clear indication that the titleholders would not be able to retain their crown.

The three competing teams are mostly made up of national team players who took part in the Pan-Arab Games in July in

addition to the younger players on the teams.

Al Jazireh are missing most of their original lineup for a host of personal reasons.

The team is led by Rana Hussein and includes Hala Ghattas and a younger lineup in the surprising absence of Hala Muheisen, Tala Al Mauge, Rania Dajani, Indeirah Qaseisich, and Tamara Khadra — all key national team players the last three of which also failed to show up for the national teams matches at the Pan-Arab Games.

Al Orthodoxy might seem to have the most coherent and prepared lineup this year after having played as

juniors for the past three seasons and gaining experience from their national team matches. The players also had training matches in Syria recently.

The team includes Hind Ghouri, Zina Farah, Luma Abu Judum, Hala Khalaf and Lubna Masri.

Al Ahli have been training under new coach Raffi Cholukyan after a makeover in the club's basketball management and the handing of the reigns to new officials hoping to bring back the club's glorious basketball achievements.

The team includes Sirsa Nagahway, Sirsa Abaza, Ruwa Hijazi, Zein Shasha and Tetyana Qardan.

Standings

	P	W	L	SE	SA	PTS
Orthodoxy	3	3	-	238	146	6
Ahli	3	1	2	179	194	4
Jazireh	2	-	2	81	158	2

World Cup qualifiers

China, Qatar draw

DOHA (AP) — Qatar and China played to a 1-1 draw in a second round Group A World Cup qualifier Friday.

Qatar opened the scoring in the ninth minute when Nasser Kamil split the Chinese defence and slotted a right-footed strike into the net.

Qatar seemed to be an overall better team in the first half than the one that lost to Kuwait a week ago, but serious defensive lapses were an indicator of things to come.

The Chinese seemed able to arrive at the Qatar goal at will with Qatar goalkeeper Yunis Ahmed bearing the brunt of the defensive efforts.

However, a vibrant midfield and strike force allowed Qatar to prove they can be a dangerous team when concentrating on

scoring.

The Chinese came out attacking in the second half and Qatar, seemingly content with their one goal lead, allowed them the space needed to mount one dangerous attack after another.

Goalkeeper Ahmad intervened successfully at times and a strike that shook the right-hand post of his goal in the 53rd minute only meant that a Chinese goal was coming. It came in the 68th minute when Qatar's defence lagged far behind as a powerful Chinese shot from Hu Hai Dai shook the Qatar net.

The Chinese, not content with a draw, kept coming forward, and Qatar was unable to match their enthusiasm.

Kaiserslautern crash 3-1 at home

BONN (AFP) — German League leaders Kaiserslautern crashed to their first defeat of the season on Saturday, losing 3-1 to mid-table Werder Bremen.

But despite the setback, Otto Rehagel's men hold a two-point lead over Bayern Munich, held 1-1 on Friday at the Olympic Stadium by UEFA Cup holders Schalke 04.

Promoted last season, Kaiserslautern, won won at Munich on the opening day, took the lead Saturday through Olaf Marschall on five minutes. But the visitors, formerly coached by Rehagel, roared back with goals from Bruno Labbadia, once a championship-winner with the home side, before securing the points with late strikes from Howard Flo and Dieter Frey.

Elsewhere, European champions Borussia Dortmund slid to a 3-2 home defeat against 1860 Munich to slip five places to 12th, ten points off the pace.

Ghanaian Abedi Pele put the visitors ahead after 13 minutes only for Stephane Chapuisat to equalise five minutes later. Bernhard Winkler then shocked the home fans with goals either side of the break before Matthias Sammer scored a consolation.

MSV Duisburg meanwhile leapt into third spot, one point behind Bayern, with a 2-1 win at home to Arminia Bielefeld on Friday.

Ali auction set next month

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — Much of Muhammad Ali's historic boxing memorabilia will be auctioned off here next month, a move the legendary boxer and his wife Lonnie are protesting.

Ali claims members of his entourage stole many of the items that will be put upon the bidding block at Christie's here on October 19.

Among those who will be bidding on a collection of 3,000 pieces are organisers of a group trying to obtain items to place in a museum planned for Ali in his hometown of Louisville, Kentucky.

A white terry-cloth robe Ali wore for his first fight with Sonny Liston is expected to bring as much as \$60,000. It is embroidered with "The Greatest" in script and "The Lip" in large letters above an Ali autograph.

Only on the day after the fight did Cassius Clay reveal his religious conversion and tell the world he wished to be known as Ali.

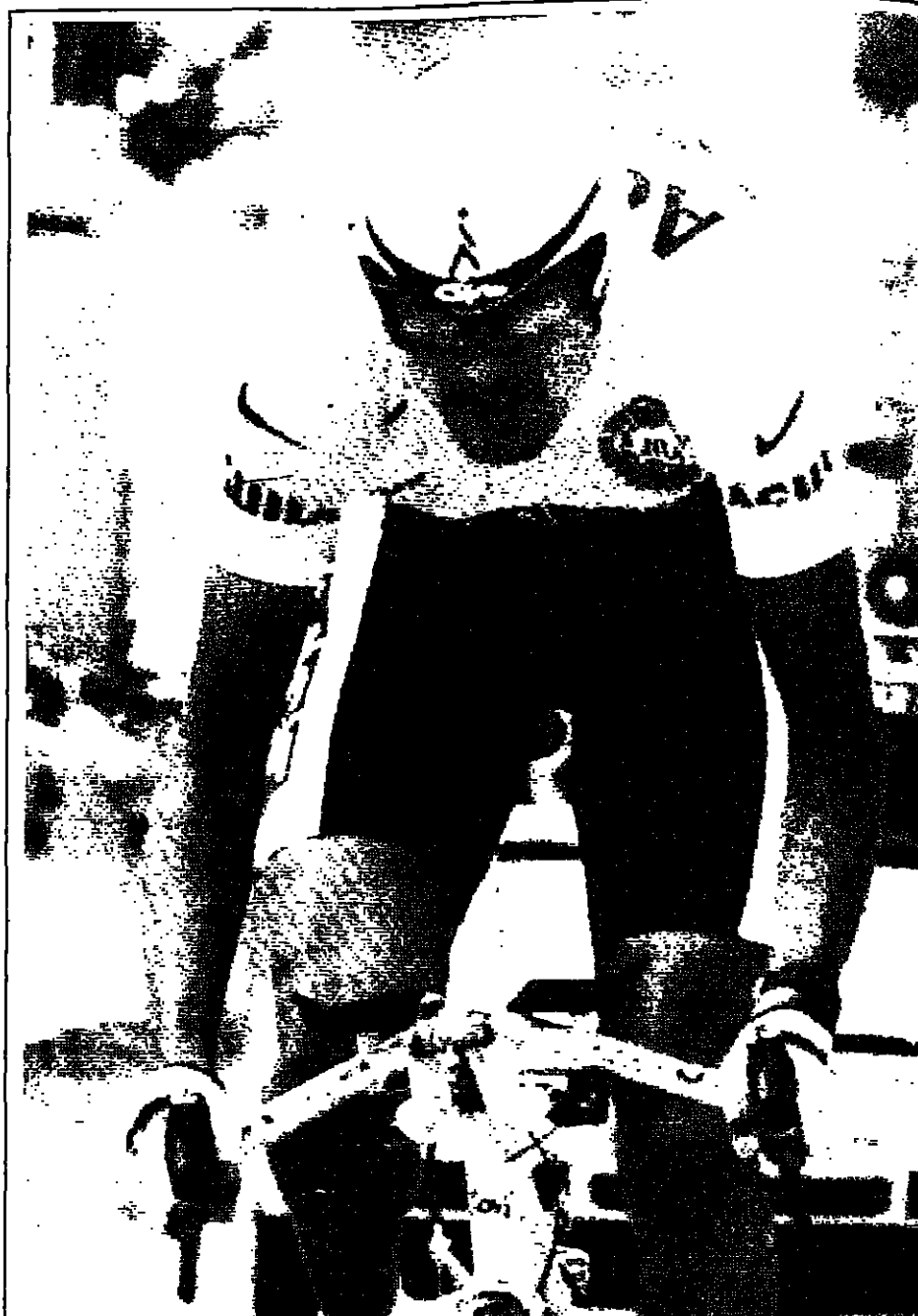
"Ali's stuff always brings high prices," said memorabilia collector J. Russell Peltz. "They talk about a 1960 Golden Gloves trophy he won. That should bring 30 grand."

"A Cassius Clay signature goes high. A programme from his fight with Doug Jones sells for \$1,500. A lot of those things are one-of-a-kind items."

A mouthpiece worn by Ali will bring about \$1,000. A water bottle he drank might go for \$1,500.

A 1970 boxing license application signed by Ali during his exile from boxing for refusing induction into the Army might bring \$3,000.

White shoes Ali wore for his fight in Zaire against George Foreman could bring \$20,000 while an unused ticket to the "Thrilla in Manila" is expected to bring \$4,000.



Yellow jersey holder Swiss Alex Zuelle races to win the 43km individual time trial 21st stage of the Tour of Spain cycling race on September 27 (Reuters photo)

Rangers chief ponders Torino investment

GLASGOW (AFP) — Rangers chairman David Murray revealed on Saturday that he is considering an offer to buy into Serie-B outfit Torino.

Murray insists he is not about to launch a take-over bid for the sleeping Italian giants but admits he is prepared to invest large sums of his personal fortune to help boost their struggling commercial operation.

"I am, simply, looking to invest in other clubs from a commercial point of view," he said. "It would be a financial investment for me and not a take-over bid."

"Torino have asked me if I fancy getting involved and it has gone no further than that."

"Clubs like Rangers, Celtic and Manchester United are like brand names now and the commercial potential at somewhere like Torino is enormous."

"Even though they are going through a difficult time, they are probably the fourth biggest club in Italy."

Murray revealed that former Rangers boss Graeme Souness — the current Torino manager — was involved in discussions that could lead to mutual benefits for both clubs.

"Graeme was obviously the catalyst for talks, which began two or three months ago," he added.

Massimo Vidulich, the Torino president and head of the group of Genoese businessmen who took control of the club last season, also confirmed Murray's interest.

He said: "We agreed to co-operate on certain things, but selling the club is not one of them — Torino is not for sale."

Meanwhile, Rangers are reported to be lining up a move for 12 million pound-rated (about \$20 million) Chilean striker Marcelo Salas.

The 23-year-old international, currently at Argentinian champions River Plate, could link up with former team mate Sebastian Rozental at Ibrox.

Clearing the obstacles — Hani and Ibrahim Bisharat poised for further success

By Omar Karrai
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — With two clear rounds and an advantage of two seconds, Ibrahim Bisharat took first prize at the Show Jumping Novice Competition (ages 12 to 18) at the Arabian Horse Club at the weekend. Half an hour later, Hani Bisharat, his father, won the Advanced Competition.

Though the field boasted some of the foremost riders in Jordan, you could have been forgiven for thinking this was a family affair: Maysam Bisharat, Ibrahim's 14 year old cousin, took third place in the Novice Competition.

It didn't come as a surprise to the handful of spectators present — mostly members of the Arabian Horse Club.

Hani has long been regarded as the finest show-jumper in Jordan, who, barring an accident which saw him break his collar bone, would have represented Jordan at the Atlanta Olympics.

His track record is solid, with victories in the Abu Dhabi Dunhill Challenge, the Oman Gulf Championship and the Latakia Grand Prix among his proudest achievements.

Ibrahim, still only thirteen, with recent triumphs in Sharm El Sheikh and Latakia, is in the best of royal traditions, poised to succeed him, and assume the mantle of leading rider.

The father/son relationship is very important. They train together, and although Ibrahim has a trainer, his father will always oversee the training.

They often compete against each other: "When I ride against my father I always try harder because I want to win. And I do. But so does he... sometimes."

Ibrahim started riding at the age of four, encouraged by his father. "At first I didn't like the idea. I was scared of falling. But I trained hard, my trainer was strict with me, and my father encouraged me, so day after day I improved

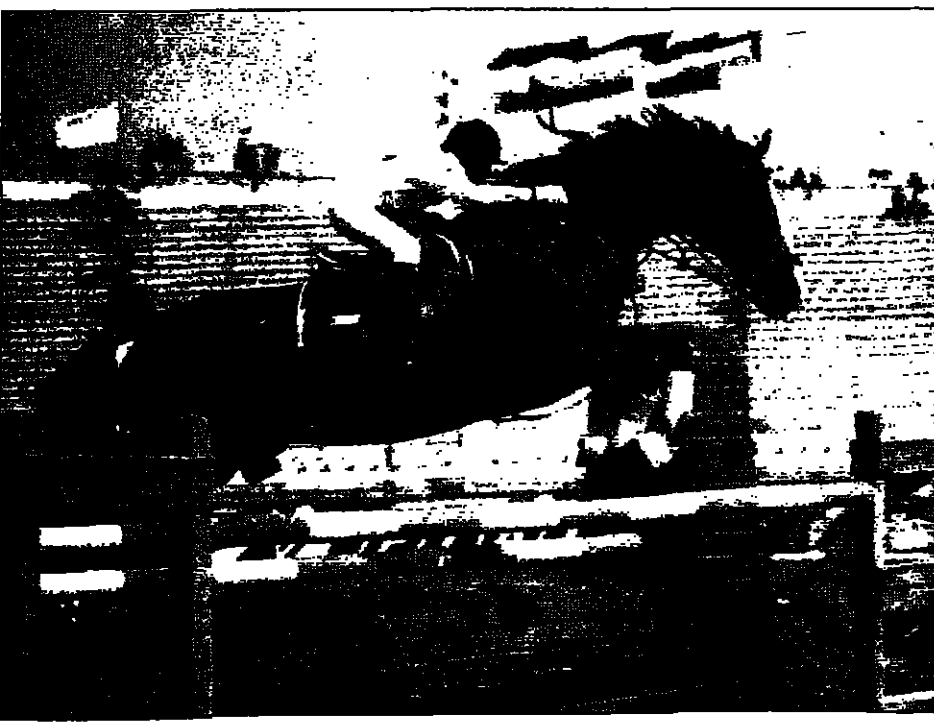
and started loving it."

He still trains very hard, but homework comes first. "I want Ibrahim to finish school and go to university. He is a good student, and I hope he will go to a top university." Every day he must finish his homework before joining his father at the club. If there is too much school work misses out on training.

Show jumping is a growing sport in Jordan, but it wasn't always like that. Hani Bisharat started the Arabian Horse Club in 1982, at a time when there was very little interest in the sport in Jordan.

"We started the club with twenty horses, and we had a French instructor. Our aim was to encourage Jordanians take up this sport. We worked very hard, and started improving until, in 1985, we got an invitation to the Arab Games in Kuwait. We finished sixth out of thirteen countries."

Since then we have received invitations to most of the shows in the Middle



The younger Bisharat clears a hurdle, one of many he seems destined to overcome in his promising career in equestrian (file photo)

East. We took part and eventually got some good results.

I think we've come a long way, and the Jordanian team is one of

the top teams in the Arab region now," says Hani.

The club has in the meantime grown bigger, it now holds 64 horses. The sport itself has also grown: There

is now a Jordanian Equestrian Federation whose president is HRH Princess Alia, and every year the Federation hosts a large international tournament, the Royal Jordanian Championship, at Aqaba in which ten countries, five from Europe and five from the Middle East compete. This tournament is covered live by JTV for its entire three day duration.

The junior team, which has already produced results with Ibrahim's win in Latakia, is now the main priority for Hani Bisharat.

"This was really an achievement for Ibrahim, raising the Jordanian flag at the international tournament in Latakia. I feel my biggest achievement, apart from winning tournaments, has been to build this junior team."

The junior team follows a strict training programme, but training by itself does not make a good rider. "To be a good show jumper you need a good eye. You need patience. You have to be tough and smooth at the same time. It's not just a matter of sitting on the horse, you have to work it, exercise it, make all the training pay off."

Nor is it simply a matter of being a good rider. Ibrahim's horse is a beautiful Dutch gelding called Amigo II. Watching the two ride is to understand that there is more to it than the human element.

"The relationship between me and my horse is special. I've had him since '94 and we were both beginners. We started improving together. It's not just a matter of a good horse or a good rider; you have to be a team. That is very important!"

There is still a long way to go for Ibrahim. At thirteen he still has a lot to achieve, and a lot of work to do. But when it comes to support he has no greater pillar than his own father.

"I think he is a very good rider, and he has a very good eye. He is talented and brave," says Hani. "After university I would love to see him on the European circuit, competing against the best riders, and I will do my best to get him there." Is he capable? "Definitely!"

Chana players rewarded

CHANA (AFP) — Chanaian president J... decided a \$10,000 bonus to coaches at... the final of the World Under-17... in Cairo on Sunday — the country... announced on Friday. Members of the... each for reaching...

Kaiser dreams of new stadium

MUNICH (AFP) — Bayern Munich... decided to serve another... plans to build a new stadium, un... Kaiser's Palace, will be looked at...

Schwabl retires

MUNICH (AFP) — The aged former... Manfred Schwabl, on Friday... retirement from football to spend more... Schwabl has asked his current club... to cancel the contract... Schwabl signed for Treviso a... at the end of last season.

Philippoussis reaches semi

MELBOURNE (AFP) — Australia's... Philippoussis reached the semi-finals of... event here on Friday after elimin... Clement 7-5, 3-6, 7-6 (7/5). Phil... now comes up against court gave... American Justin Gimelstob (U... to the other last eight clashes. German... Tommy Haas 6-1, 6-4, 6-7 (5/7), 7-5.

CINEMA TEL: 677141	CINEMA TEL: 634144	CINEMA TEL: 699238	CINEMA TEL: 677420	CINEMA TEL: 079 33430	CINEMA TEL: 079 33330	Risham Yanes Theatre TEL: 625155
PHILADELPHIA "1"	PHILADELPHIA "2"	PLAZA	CONCORD	GALLERIA 1	GALLERIA 2	
Bruce Willis...in THE FIFTH ELEMENT	Robin Williams & Gene Hackman...in THE BIRDCAGE	BAD COMPANY	CONCORD "1" Jack Nicholson, Glenn Close, Danny DeVito & Pierce Brosnan...in MARS ATTACKS (12:30, 3:30, 6:00, 8:30, 10:30)	ABDOUN John Travolta & Nicolas Cage...in FACE OFF	ABDOUN Julia Roberts...in MY BEST FRIEND'S WEDDING	Watch out for the new play THE GOVERNMENT IN THE SERVICE OF PEOPLE Starring Hisham Yanes and Amal Dabbas
Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30	CONCORD "2" BATMAN & ROBIN Shows: 3:30, 5:45 only	Shows: 3:30, 6:00, 8:30, 10:45	Shows: 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30	

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Soccer season kicks off at Amman Little League

By Roufan Nahhas
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Action is back at the Amman Little League (ALL) with the start of the soccer season this week with around twenty teams taking part at the ALL field near Ghumadan Park.

The league comprises 20 teams divided into 5 divisions. The teams include students from every school in the Kingdom for a simple fee, Soccer Commissioner Nabil Khoury told the Jordan Times.

"The Amman Little League Association was established several years ago with the help and support of His Majesty King Hussein and Her Royal Highness Princess Basma. Anyone can join the ALL for a mere fee of JD30 per season," he noted.

Three major sports are played in the little league. Basketball, soccer and baseball, Khoury added. "Boys and girls as young as six years old can join in. Up to 16-year-olds can be part of the league," he pointed out.

The teams are divided into five groups each of which carry the name of

the group according to their age groups.

"We have around 275 players and the teams are divided according to their ages," he said.

There are five teams in the Tots division (1990-1992) with 15 players in each; Juniors I (1988-1989) have four teams with 15 players in each; Junior II (1986-1987) includes four teams with 15 in each; the Mids (1984-1985) where there are 53 kids and finally the Seniors 1981-1983 with three teams and 9 in each.

ALL Baseball players gain experience through playing against other lit-

tle league teams abroad.

"Every year the little league goes to either Germany or Poland for the Little League Baseball Championships," Khoury said.

"Each time we travel, we gain experience and confidence."

"We would like to thank His Majesty King Hussein for his generous contribution in providing the tickets to the little league teams," he added.

The ALL now has its own field for practice and matches, where the activities are run with the help of tens of volunteers from families and friends.

AMMAN LITTLE LEAGUE RESULTS

Friday Sept. 26

• Tots Division 1990-1992 (Rule of all are winners)				
ATRO	vs	Delonghi		
McDonald's	vs	Alasadat Exchange		
• Junior One 88-89				
Aljawhara	0	vs	Varta	1
Nokia	0	vs	IPCO	0
• Juniors Two (86-87)				
Porsche	2	vs	RJ	1
RMCCS	1	vs	Intervet	2
• Mids Division (84-85)				
Arby's	6	vs	Reinert	2
Dune's Club vs Amigo Nabil Sun 28th				
• Seniors Division (81-83)				
Jod Insurance	4	vs	All coaches	6
Coffee Break	vs	Zalafimo	Tue. 30th	

With record in bag, Thrust aims for sound barrier

GERLACH, Nevada (R) — The Thrust supersonic car has smashed the world land speed record, but the most difficult challenge — trying to break the sound barrier on land — is yet to come, the car's designers said on Friday.

"In climbing Everest, it's the top bit that's the difficult bit," said aerodynamicist Ron Ayers, who did pioneering research on the design of the British car.

Royal Air Force fighter pilot Andy Green drove the huge black jet car across Nevada's Black Rock Desert on Thursday at 1,142 kilometres per hour, shattering the previous record of 1,012 kph held since 1983 by Richard Noble, who now leads the Thrust SSC team.

Ayers and Glynne Bowsher, who designed Thrust's frame and rear-wheel steering, said they were pleased with the record achieved by the 9-tonne car, which is powered by two jet engines from a phantom fighter aircraft.

Breaking the record is just a step toward the team's ultimate goal of breaking the sound barrier on land for the first time. Many people have thought it would be impossible for a car to break the sound barrier without taking off, but Thrust's designers believe they have solved the technical problems.

The team did not run the car on Friday. "We've got to check over the car very carefully to see that no damage has occurred," Ayers said.

In a few days' time, if all is well, the team's intention is to increase Thrust's speed gradually toward Mach 1 — the speed of sound. Green said on Thursday that the team needed more money to enable it to push on to the sound barrier.

The speed of sound varies according to temperature, but in the Nevada desert on Thursday, it was around 1,227 kph, Ayers said.

"We want to beat it (the speed of sound) by not just one mile an hour. We want to beat it by 1 or 2 per cent, so there is no argument," Ayers said in an interview.

So far, Ayers said, everything the design team has learned about the car confirms its theories. But he said the team was cautious about making predictions because "in the transonic aerodynamic region (the region around supersonic speeds), situations can change very rapidly indeed. One small error could lead to instant disaster."

Hakkinen takes pole position in Luxembourg

NURBURGRING, Germany (AFP) — Mike Hakkinen overshadowed world championship rivals Jacques Villeneuve and Michael Schumacher for the second straight day Saturday, taking pole position for the Luxembourg Grand Prix.

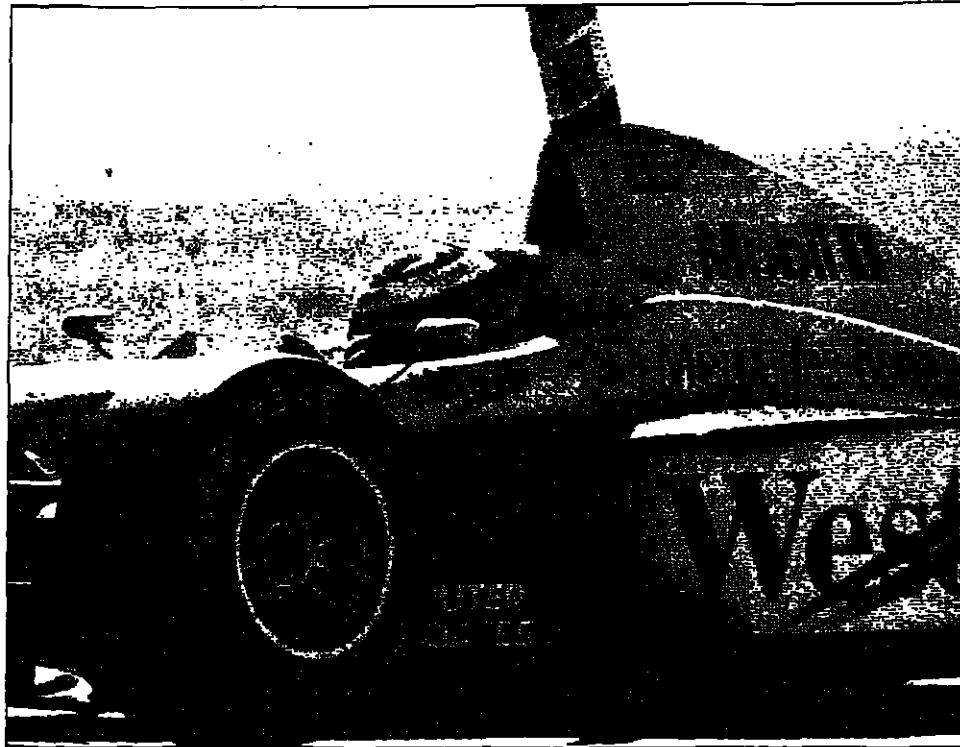
The flying Finn, who has never won a Formula One race, earned the first pole of his career by driving his McLaren-Mercedes around the 4.556km Nurburgring circuit in 1min 16.602sec.

Hakkinen will celebrate his 29th birthday on Sunday by being on pole for the first time in 94 race starts.

The Finn just missed out on pole to Villeneuve in Austria last week. This time he edged the Williams-Renault driver by just 0.089 of a second.

Villeneuve, who trails two-time champion Schumacher by one point going into the 15th race of the 17-race season, was second-fastest at 1:16.691 in his Williams-Renault.

"It is a little bit frustrating missing out on pole when you are so close, but I'm in front of Michael which is important," Villeneuve said.



Finnish Formula One driver Mika Hakkinen of team McLaren Mercedes in action during a qualifying session for the Luxembourg Grand Prix September 27. Hakkinen finished in 1:16.602 ahead of Canadian Jacques Villeneuve and will start from pole position Sunday (Reuters photo)

"It is very hard to overtake on this circuit, so the race will be won at the start and in the pit-stops."

Villeneuve's teammate Heinz-Harald Frentzen was third-quickest, ahead of Italian Giancarlo Fisichella

who took the other second-row place on the grid in his Jordan-Peugeot.

German ace Schumacher was only fifth-fastest in his Ferrari, ahead of Hakkinen's Scottish teammate

David Coulthard. Schumacher finished three-quarters of a second adrift of pole and also had to be given a lift back to the pits at the end of qualifying when his Ferrari seemed to run out of fuel.

Rusedski reaches semis after serving blitz

MUNICH (AFP) — Britain's Greg Rusedski fired over a record-equaling fastest serve in the world on his way to a 6-7 (6/8), 6-3, 6-1 comeback victory Friday night over Russian Yevgeny Kafelnikov to reach the semi-finals of the \$6 million Grand Slam Cup.

The big-serving Briton let off a rocket clocked at 230 kilometres per hour, at least the equal to the world's best he notched at the U.S. Open this month.

The New York figure was registered without decimal points, making its precise speed unknown.

Friday's stinging serve

came as Rusedski claimed a 3-0 lead in the second set after dropping the first at the Olympiastadion.

The World No. 10 joins Pete Sampras as a semi-finalist at the rich event, limited to the 16 best performers at the year's four Grand Slams.

Top seed Sampras won a preview match of next month's Davis Cup final as he beat Swede Jonas Bjorkman 7-6 (8-6), 6-4 to take a semifinal place.

Sampras and Bjorkman, the respective No. 1 players in their countries, are sure to square off again in Gothenburg from November 28 to 30 for the Davis Cup final.

Winners in Thursday quarterfinals, U.S. Open champion Pat Rafter of Australia and 1993 champion Petr Korda of the Czech Republic, play in the other semi-final.

Rusedski, the first British player ever to rank in the Top Ten of the ATP Tour, earned his Munich place with a quarter-final showing at Wimbledon and a final loss at the U.S. Open this month to Patrick Rafter.

The Canadian-born left-hander is the second Brit to play in Munich after Tim Henman broke ground by qualifying for the 1996 field and reached the semi-finals.

Rusedski fought throughout the 44th-minute first set, starting as he saved two set points for the Russian in the 10th game to hold for 5-5.

When the tight contest eventually went into a tiebreak, Rusedski started out with a 220 kph ace. But Kafelnikov, whose big-match experience includes a 1996 title at the French Open, refused to be denied.

The Russian reached 5-3 in the decider and profited from Rusedski's return wide for three set points.

The big-serving Briton saved the first with an ace, the second with an ace on second serve, but couldn't handle a retaliatory ace off

the racket of the Russian to clinch the opener.

Rusedski began his comeback in the second set then consolidated in the third, allowing the former French Open holder to win only the first game before taking charge.

Rusedski faces Sampras on Saturday in the best-of-five semi-final.

"I played as good as I've played all year in those final two sets," said Rusedski, who has now reached \$425,000 (about £275,000) for the week. "It was a very satisfying win."

"I knew that after playing a bad tiebreaker that I had chances to win the match. I picked it up in the final two sets. The key to the match was my returns, though I was serving well also."

"I kept the pressure on him," said Rusedski, who notched 23 aces. "If I keep playing like this, I can come closer to achieving my next goal, which is to reach the Top 5."

Rusedski said he is keen for his Saturday re-match against Sampras, who won the title in San Jose, California, against the Briton when Rusedski had to retire with a wrist injury after winning the first set and going down 0-5 in the second.

During that week in February, the Briton also beat Michael Chang and Andre Agassi.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

7 to enter Basketball Hall of Fame

SPRINGFIELD (AFP) — Spanish coaching legend Antonio Diaz-Miguel is among seven people who will be inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame here Monday. Joining him on the honour list will be former Princeton University coach Pete Carril, now 69 and an assistant coach for the National Basketball Association's Sacramento Kings. Also being inducted are former NBA player Alex English, retired 1950's NBA standout Bailey Howell, former college coach Don Haskins and American women's players Joan Crawford and Denise Curry.

Gonzalez ready to test Chavez

NEW YORK (AFP) — Miguel Angel Gonzalez wants fellow Mexican and six-time world champion Julio Cesar Chavez to know, in no uncertain terms, that he feels a new champion's time has arrived. "I am the best fighter in Mexico," Gonzalez said. "Chavez knows he is finished. When he fights me, he will get knocked out." That will happen on October 25 in Mexico City, when top-ranked contender Chavez and second-rated challenger Gonzalez meet for the vacant World Boxing Council super lightweight title. During a promoter's conference call here Gonzalez vowed victory. "I would like to score a KO," Gonzalez said. "I know the best man will win and that will be me."

Ghana players rewarded

ACCRA (AFP) — Ghanaian president Jerry Rawlings has awarded a \$1,000 bonus to coaches and players who reached the final of the World Under-17 event — won by Brazil in Cairo on Sunday — the country's sports minister announced on Friday. Members of the Ghana team had already received \$2,200 each for reaching the semi-finals.

Kaiser dreams of new stadium

MUNICH (AFP) — Bayern Munich president Franz Beckenbauer decided to serve another three-year term because of plans to build a new stadium, the club said on Friday. The proposal for the building, unofficially dubbed "the Kaiser's Palace", will be looked at by the club in November.

Schwabl retires

MUNICH (AFP) — The axed former captain of TSV Munich 1860, Manfred Schwabl, on Friday announced his retirement from football to spend more time with his family. Schwabl has asked his current club, Italian second division side Treviso, to annul the contract he signed two weeks ago. "It's over," said the 31-year-old former international. Schwabl signed for Treviso after being axed by TSV Munich 1860 at the end of last season.

Philippoussis reaches semis

TOULOUSE (AFP) — Australia's third seed Mark Philippoussis reached the semi-finals of the \$400,000 ATP Tour event here on Friday after eliminating France's Arnaud Clement 7-5, 3-6, 7-6 (7/5). Philippoussis, who said Clement's speed about court gave him most problems, now comes up against American Vincent Spadea who beat American Justin Gimelstob (USA) 6-3, 7-6 (7/4). In the other last eight clashes, Germany's Alex Radulescu beat compatriot Tommy Haas 6-1, 6-4 and meets Germany's Nicolas Kiefer, who ousted Frenchman Guillaume Raoux 6-2, 6-7 (2/7), 7-5.

Wetherall ends United's unbeaten run

LONDON (AFP) — Leeds United defender David Wetherall handed Manchester United their first defeat of the season on Saturday and the first away goal they had conceded as his revitalised side beat the Premiership champions 1-0.

Arsenal retained the lead with a 2-2 draw away at Everton, although the Londoners let a two-goal lead slip, while Leicester moved into third with a 2-0 win over Barnsley — Blackburn can go second if they beat Coventry on Sunday.

Wetherall headed Leeds into a 34th-minute lead, his second of the season, against Manchester United, revenge for the 4-0 defeat they suffered at Elland Road last season which heralded the end of Howard Wilkinson's reign — it also gave the Yorkshire club the lead in head-to-head meetings by 14 wins to 13.

Crystal Palace got their first home point of the season with a 2-2 draw with fellow newcomers Bolton, however they allowed the visitors to come back from two goals down.

West Ham ended a run of four consecutive defeats with a fine 2-1 home win over Liverpool Israeli playmaker Eyal Berkovich volleying home from 18 yards to clinch the points.

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Opening lead: Three of 0

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At the table declarer captured East's king of diamonds with the ace and fished out the ace of hearts. East returned a diamond, and West allowed dummy's ten to win the trick. Declarer led only eight tricks without clubs. It was easy enough to get up tricks in the suit, but declarer never got to enjoy them. East rushed up with the ace on the first club lead and returned another diamond, and the defenders came to three diamond tricks to go with the two aces — down one.

Curiously, the winning play is to give the opponents a trick to which they are not entitled, and in the process shut out two of their trumps. Declarer must allow the king of diamonds to win the first round of the suit. The continuation of the eight of diamonds is also ducked, declarer winning the third round of the suit. Since East is marked by the opening bid for both the ace of hearts and the ace of clubs, declarer can now go about driving both of them out and West cannot regain the lead.

What if diamonds are 4-7? That is against the odds and unlikely because of the opening lead. West would not refrain from leading partner's suit to attack with a weak four-card minor.

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A FRENCH SHOE PILE UP, IN PROTEST: People pile shoes on the "Irocaero" near the Eiffel Tower in a protest over the use of anti-personnel landmines, Saturday. The demonstration, which has been organised for the last three years in various French towns, is in protest over the hundreds of thousands of people killed or injured by mines every year (Reuters photo)

Saudi minister says intervention to help nurses would complicate case

DUBAI (R) — Any intervention in the case of two British nurses accused of murder in Saudi Arabia would complicate the issue, the kingdom's foreign minister said in remarks published Saturday.

"Any form of intervention in the legal process would only lead to complicating the issue of the two British nurses," the Saudi-owned Al Sharq Al Awsat quoted a statement by Prince Saud Al Faisal as saying.

The Arabic daily newspaper said the statement was issued after a meeting between Prince Saud and his British counterpart Robin Cook at the United Nations Friday.

Britain is anxious about a sentence of 500 lashes and eight years in jail against Lucille McLauchlan, 31. A verdict has yet to be passed on Deborah Parry, 38, who could be beheaded if convicted of murder.

Both women deny killing Yvonne Gilford, an Australian colleague at the military medical centre in eastern Saudi Arabia where all three worked.

They retracted confessions they said were made after sexual and physical abuse following their arrest soon after Gilford's body was discovered in her room last December. She had been stabbed 13 times, bludgeoned and suffocated.

Mr. Cook said Friday he had asked for clemency for the two during the meeting and said the prince's reply was encouraging.

"I made a humanitarian plea this afternoon and it was heard with sympathy. I am now more hopeful than I was before this meeting that I will

be able to achieve a humane outcome," he said.

Prince Saud said in the statement: "I appreciate the concern stirred by this issue in Britain," the London-based newspaper reported.

Prince Saud said his country also understood the concern of the family of the victim.

"I have informed him (Cook) that the Saudi government had respected all of its commitments and provided full help...since the beginning there have been consular and diplomatic consultations between the two governments. I proposed that we continue that process, especially as the legal proceedings are not yet complete."

"I have explained to him that our judicial system is totally independent and that the two nurses would continue to have a fair trial."

Mr. Cook called the sentence passed against McLauchlan "wholly unacceptable in the modern world."

Legal sources in Saudi Arabia said the cases would have to go through an elaborate appeals process before any sentence could be carried out. All death sentences must be approved by King Fahd.

Lawyers for Parry are negotiating with Gilford's brother Frank, who under Saudi law has the right either to call for clemency or to demand the death penalty by beheading if she is found guilty of murdering his sister.

Mr. Gilford said Friday he would consider taking "blood money" from Parry but denied agreeing to accept \$1.2 million to waive the death penalty.

Price of mercy is million dollars plus prison, says brother of slain nurse

SYDNEY (AFP) — The brother of murdered Australian nurse Yvonne Gilford has demanded a million dollar donation and eight years in prison as the price of mercy for her accused killer, according to reports Saturday.

Frank Gilford told the Sydney Morning Herald that he wants a total of \$1.1 million to cover a donation for charity, plus legal costs, to spare English nurse Deborah Parry from the executioner's sword.

He also spoke out against flogging the two women. "If the money is paid and a Saudi court can guarantee to impose the prison term, Mr. Gilford said he will relinquish his right under Saudi law to demand the death penalty and will instead grant clemency."

Parry, 38, is facing death by beheading for the murder, while Scots nurse Lucille McLauchlan, 31, has been sentenced to 500 lashes and eight years as an accomplice to the murder last December.

The two nurses have accused Gilford of worsening their mental torment and of being mercenary for seeking blood money.

But Mr. Gilford said he did not want either woman to suffer the lash, saying: "Eight years punishment is enough."

"Five hundred lashes is too much for anyone, no matter what they've done. It's barbaric. I don't want that. I wouldn't have any part of it."

Mr. Gilford's role in the case stems from a centuries-old Arab custom of paying "blood money" or *Diya* that pre-dates Islam and was integrated into Islamic law after it was mentioned in the Koran.

Mr. Gilford has denied he wants to make a personal profit and has raised the possibility of contributing the cash toward refurbishment of an old Adelaide motel to house patients who visit the city for cancer treatment.

Asked in an earlier interview whether he wanted to make a profit, Mr. Gilford, from Jamestown in South Australia, said: "No, no, if there were a few dollars left over for me (that's okay), but I'm not in it for the money."

In letters to Britain's High Commissioner to Australia, Sir Roger Carrick, Parry and McLauchlan repeated "pleas of innocence and condemned the death being suggested by lawyers."

"But in the circumstances, I have no choice but to sign because the threat of the death penalty is too much for me to continue to bear," Parry said in the letter, dated Sept. 22.

The two nurses were arrested after the body of Yvonne Gilford was found with multiple stab wounds at a medical centre in the eastern Saudi city of Dhahran in December.

Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz authorised the Turkish military to begin planning for unspecified counter-measures if the missiles are deployed.

That prompted the State Department to urge all parties to "avoid statements which exacerbate the tensions over this issue."

The harsh words cast doubt on efforts by the international community to encourage resolution of the 23-year division of Cyprus. Turkey sent troops to the island in 1974 to protect the Turkish minority after a failed coup by Greek officers seeking union with Greece.

U.N.-brokered negotiations between Cypriot President Glafcos Clerides and Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktash broke down last month because the Turks objected to plans by the European Union (EU) to begin talks with the Greek Cypriot government on EU membership.

Turkey also wants to join the EU. Mr. Denktash said Cyprus should not be admitted without Turkey.

Israeli tells of army hit squads in Gaza in '70s

TEL AVIV (R) — An Israeli army unit under the overall command of then-General Ariel Sharon served at times as a hit squad, gunning down wanted Gaza Strip militants in the early 1970s, a former member has said.

Among the members of the elite Rimmon patrol unit was Danny Okev, later an army reserve major, who has confessed to killing a British tourist and wounding his girlfriend in a shooting last month in an Israeli desert area.

Rimmon was formed to combat a wave of Palestinian attacks against Israeli civilians and occupation troops in Gaza some three years after the Strip was occupied in the wake of the 1967 Middle East war.

In an interview with Israel television's Channel One aired Friday, Rimmon veteran Benny Golan described some of the unit's operational methods against guerrillas on a most-wanted list.

"It was permitted to fire at an armed man," Golan said. "So, sometimes, maybe a grenade or a Kalashnikov [automatic rifle] was put near [an unarmed fugitive]. Then, when he bent over to pick it up, he turned into an armed man."

At the time Mr. Sharon, now a minister in Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's cabinet, was

overall commander of the Strip and spearheaded a campaign to hunt down Palestinian fighters throughout Gaza.

Mr. Sharon declined to comment, the television said.

Okev, 45, confessed to the August killing of British tourist Jeffrey Hunter, 22, and the wounding of hunter's girlfriend Charlotte Gibb, 20, in the southern Arava Desert.

Speaking to a television reporter during a court hearing this week, a gaunt, handcuffed Okev hinted that mental images of his three years in Rimmon — Hebrew for both "Pomegranate" and "Grenade" — may have had an impact on his shooting the couple.

"[The images] are in my memory all the time, the incidents of my service, all my service, all the time," Okev said.

Asked if he participated in executions during his time in the unit, Okev replied, "does it seem to you I spent three years just playing backgammon?"

Golan, who served with Okev, said that in addition to military duties in uniform, the troops also disguised themselves as Arabs for special operations.

"It was not a regular military unit, because whenever people put on civilian clothes, perhaps they also

feel they're not just soldiers, perhaps they also feel special, and if they're special, they may do what is forbidden to the non-special."

In a statement ordered cut short by military censors, Golan said there were operations in which Rimmon troops would "understand that either you took them aside to some alley..."

His comments were then blocked by a shrill electronic sound lasting several seconds, with a caption reading "stricken by the censor."

Golan said he objected to the unit having been called a liquidation squad. "It was a military unit that carried out liquidations."

He said the soldiers were not explicitly ordered to kill.

"There are things that need not be said, that are understood without being said, in the atmosphere that was there then. You can give hints, so the spirit of the message will be understood."

Asked if wanted men were lined up against a wall and shot, Golan said: "I will not answer that."

Golan said he had refrained from contacting fellow members of the unit, which was disbanded after the 1973 Middle East war.

"I would prefer to forget the period — no, not forget it, erase it," he said.

Yemen vows to protect tourists against kidnapping by tribesmen

SANAA (R) — Yemen, eager to end a spate of kidnappings that threatens its tourist industry, on Saturday vowed to protect tourists from the moment they arrive until they leave.

"There is a security plan between the ministry of culture and tourism and the interior ministry, the summary of which is to cradle the tourist from the moment of arrival in Yemen until departure," Deputy Minister of Culture and Tourism Mutahar Taqi told a news conference.

Mr. Taqi gave no further details of the security plan, but said it would be costly and would effectively place the ministry in a state of emergency.

Ten Italian tourists were

kidnapped in August in the latest of a series of abductions in recent years that targeted European tourists.

Western diplomats and a Saudi ambassador were often carried out by local tribesmen who usually try to use hostages as bargaining chips in disputes with the government and foreign oil firms. All hostages have been released unharmed.

Yemeni Minister of Culture and Tourism Abdul Malek Mansour said the kidnappings and several incidents of robbery of archaeological finds strike "deep at the national economy."

Mr. Taqi reiterated charges made by other officials in the past that the kid-

nappings were instigated from abroad, but did not name any party or country.

"There is a campaign against Yemen, a campaign from outside planned and well financed," he said.

Some Yemeni officials had said opposition groups receiving Saudi financial help were responsible for the abductions.

Cash-strapped Yemen is rich in archaeological sites which attract scores of tourists mainly from Europe. About 75,000 tourists visited Yemen in 1996 generating about \$50 million in revenues.

Yemen, a small independent oil producer, depends heavily on foreign aid mainly from Europe and other Western donors.

British editors tackle newspaper reforms in wake of public uproar

LONDON (AP) — Reacting to the uproar over press intrusion following the death of Princess Diana, the press commissions asked editors Thursday to adopt "the toughest set of industry regulations anywhere in Europe."

"Motorbike chases, stalking and hounding are unacceptable — and editors who carry pictures obtained by them will be subjected to the severest censure," said the commission's chairman, Lord Wakeham.

"I have found that editors across the industry have been of the same mind — times have changed — and we want to change with them," he said in outlining the new code at a news conference.

However, work continued on details of the code, including conflicts between an "overriding public interest" and personal privacy — questions which are acute in coverage of Britain's royal family and government officials. No timetable was set for when a final code would be issued.

"I think we were able to put them on paper in such a way that you will see a change," said Sir David English, editor in chief of associated newspapers, which publishes the Daily Mail, the Mail Sunday and the Evening Standard.

Editors have already agreed not to pursue Diana's sons, Prince William, 15, and Prince Harry, 13, who are back at their boarding

schools a month after their mother's death Aug. 31 in a Paris car crash.

Nine photographers and a press motorcyclist, most of them French, are under investigation in Paris for their alleged roles in the crash, which also killed Diana's friend Dodi Fayed and their driver, Henri Paul.

When the code is finalized, editors will have to justify the behaviour not only of their staff, but of any freelance whose material they use, and if they expose someone's private life they will have to show there is an "overriding" public interest.

Mr. Wakeham's proposals cover five main points: Protection of children, discretion at times of grief, avoidance of harassment, a redefinition of privacy, and raising the threshold of public interest that would justify intruding on someone's privacy.

"I'm suggesting a new definition of privacy so that people... where they have a legitimate right to think they are in private, they should be in private," Mr. Wakeham said.

Personal privacy would include family life, an individual's health and personal correspondence, he said, as well as homes would be off-limits.

Charles Moore, editor of the daily Telegraph and a stern critic of some of his fellow editors, said the code was at a very early stage of drafting.

"I think there remains considerable disagreement about exactly how far you should go in defending the idea of privacy, and we at the daily Telegraph want to go a lot further than the tabloids," Mr. Moore told the British Broadcasting Corp.

Skeptics don't think the currently restrained attitude toward the royal family will last unless code violations are punished by heavy fines.

The self-regulatory body is composed of newspaper editors. It acts only in response to complaints from the public and has no powers of enforcement, all it can require is that the newspaper point the commission's ruling on that complaint.

Broadcasters, meanwhile, are subject to statutory regulation.

Heritage Secretary Chris Smith, the cabinet member who deals with media issues, said the government expected newspapers abide by their new code.

Mr. Wakeham said he consulted members of the public, legislators and Diana's brother, Earl Spencer, who blames the tabloid press for her death and is campaigning for a privacy law.

There were no easy solutions to the problem of paparazzi, who generally are freelancers, he said.

"The market place in which they operate is global, and no actions that we can take on our own in this country could alter that in any way," he said.

Colombian prostitutes to meet in Costa Rica

Latin American prostitutes to meet in Costa Rica

SAN JOSE (R) — Presidents do it. Free-traders, too. Now prostitutes from Latin America will hold their own regional summit.

Prostitutes from throughout Latin America will meet in Costa Rica in November, according to an official with the Latin American Institute of Health Education and Disease Prevention (ILPES) in Costa Rica. Details, however, were difficult to come by. "We're not giving out information in order to avoid scandals and because we want the women coming here to enjoy respect and avoid any trouble," ILPES official Isabel Gamboa told Reuters. Most of the summit will take place behind closed doors.

Gays to celebrate in Blair's hotel at Labour Party conference

LONDON (AFP) — The Labour leadership has approved a gay night in the hotel where Prime Minister Tony Blair and other ministers will be staying at next week's party conference. The Times said Saturday. In the past, gay meetings have been consigned to the fringe of the annual party conference, this year in Brighton on the south coast. But with one openly gay cabinet minister, Chris Smith, three gay or lesbian MPs and a government pledge to hold a vote on the age of consent on gay sex, the leadership has decided to have a gay party, the newspaper said. The paper added that the 400 tickets for the event at Brighton's Metropole Hotel were selling fast.

Amorous Hungarian burglar dials himself to jail

BRUSSELS (R) — An amorous Hungarian burglar dialled himself into the arms of the law when he rang his girlfriend using the telephone in the Belgian football club cafeteria he was robbing. The burglary, in which the robber stole food, drink, a radio, compact discs and even the telephone, happened late last month at the Lint Soccer Club in northern Belgium. It was only when the telephone bill arrived earlier this month that officials spotted the \$110 call to Hungary. Checks traced the call to a girl who had a young Hungarian boyfriend in Brussels.

Meat-eating Kohl tells McCartney: Let it be

BONN (R) — Paul McCartney tried to turn Chancellor Helmut Kohl into a vegetarian, but instead got a stomach-turning cookbook by Germany's leading meat-eater filled with his favorite beef and pork recipes. The former Beatle sent Kohl a copy of the vegetarian cookbook "Veganissimo" in July and urged the burly chancellor and his wife to join Germany's four million vegetarians.

U.S. actor Dudley Moore recovering from heart surgery

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — Actor Dudley Moore is recovering from surgery to repair a blocked artery and a hole in his heart at a hospital in Rochester, Minnesota, his spokesman said. Moore, 57, was in Los Angeles, Moore, star of movies "10," "Arthur," and "Loversick" is "doing well, and he is expected to make a full and complete recovery," said his spokesman, Michelle Bega. Moore will likely leave the hospital next week and should recover in a few days, Bega said. Moore was divorced for a second time from his fourth wife, Rothschild, in August.

U.N. mission of peace backfires in Greece-Turkey ties

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The United Nations is supposed to promote peace. But as far as Greece and Turkey are concerned, the current session of the General Assembly has backfired. Relations have gone from bad to worse.

In recent days, the Greek foreign minister has used words like "murderer" and "rapist" to describe the Turks.

Turkey claims Greece is threatening peace in the eastern Mediterranean by supporting plans by the Greek-led Cyprus government to deploy Russian-made air defence missiles, which could reach Turkey's southern coast.

Even Secretary of State Madeleine Albright failed to defuse tensions between the two NATO allies. Ms. Albright met separately Wednesday in New York with Greek Foreign Minister Theodore Pangalos and Turkish Foreign Minister Ismail Cem.

Afterward, State Department spokesman James Rubin said she

failed to achieve a breakthrough.

Greek-Turkish relations are strained over numerous issues, including the ongoing division of Cyprus, the sharing of the continental shelf, territorial waters and airspace over the Aegean Sea.

The two countries have come to the brink of war twice in the past decade. Tension heightened in December when the Greek-led government of Cyprus signed a deal to buy anti-aircraft missiles from Russia.

Turkey has threatened to attack the missiles as soon as they were installed.

After the meetings with Ms. Albright, the two foreign ministers met face-to-face. But that session produced no agreement either.

Mr. Pangalos stoked the fire by telling Greek television he could not negotiate "with the bandit, the murderer and the rapist. It is impossible."

Mr. Pangalos said he was convinced after his meeting with Mr. Cem that Turkey had territorial

ambitions in the Aegean. Those remarks enraged the Turks.

"Greek Foreign Minister Pangalos first insulted Turkish leaders by calling them 'robbers, murderers and rapists,'" Mr. Cem said in a statement. "I deplore this attitude."

Mr. Cem also accused Greece of threatening peace in the eastern Mediterranean by encouraging Cyprus to deploy the missiles. During his meetings with other foreign ministers, Mr. Cem has been urging them to use their influence with the Greek Cypriots, the Russians and the Greeks to quash the sale.

"The decision of the Greek Cypriots... creates a serious threat not only to the Turkish republic of northern Cyprus but also to Turkey," Mr. Cem said. "Furthermore, it endangers the security and stability of the whole region. We strongly urge the international community to stop the Greek Cypriots in their military buildup."

Last week, Turkish

Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz authorised the Turkish military to begin planning for unspecified counter-measures if the missiles are deployed.

That prompted the State Department to urge all parties to "avoid statements which exacerbate the tensions over this issue."

The harsh words cast doubt on efforts by the international community to encourage resolution of the 23-year division of Cyprus. Turkey sent troops to the island in 1974 to protect the Turkish minority after a failed coup by Greek officers seeking union with Greece.

U.N.-brokered negotiations between Cypriot President Glafcos Clerides and Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktash broke down last month because the Turks objected to plans by the European Union (EU) to begin talks with the Greek Cypriot government on EU membership.

Turkey also wants to join the EU. Mr. Denktash said Cyprus should not be admitted without Turkey.

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